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**"REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION:
A STUDY OF POLITICAL PROCESS IN AN
ENGLISH TOWN"**

**Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at the University
of Durham in 1978**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis concerns local-level political activity in a small town in North-East England. The background material presented documents the decline in effectiveness of the elected representative system of local government, the increasing demands for more direct participation and the problems encountered in the implementation of recent laws requiring public participation in planning.

The presentation of the data moves from a structural to an actor-oriented view of the local society and its political processes. The development and present socio-economic composition of the population are examined and both official forms of public participation and parapolitical activity in the town are found to be low. There is, nevertheless, an active and effective Parish Council, which is the focus for the later part of the thesis.

Because of its structural position at the bottom of the local government hierarchy and the introduction of official channels of public participation, the Parish Council largely operates to influence decisions made outside the locality. The composition of the present council, with its wide network links, both with the local population and with higher levels of authority, make it well-fitted to fulfil this mediatory role. Thus, on the basis of only minimal legitimate rights and duties, the council is able to achieve considerable influence over political decisions which affect the town, and hence recognition of its competence and a degree of power.

Within the Council, however, the various members have different motivations, abilities and resources. The two councillors who are both able and willing to manipulate, and whose network resources

give access to influence in local politics, are presented as brokers.

I argue that brokerage provides the dynamic element of group membership and that the niche of the Parish Council is exploited by these individuals for profit in terms of political influence.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Politics, Local Government and Planning

This thesis is a study of political processes in a small English town. These processes include far more than local government alone, yet the latter constitutes a framework of constraints and opportunities within which political activity takes place. The analysis therefore involves consideration of both substantive and theoretical issues. The substantive issues are the understanding of the role of a local council as a mediator between the public and higher authorities and the question of whether a small community can achieve any degree of autonomy within the local government system. The main theoretical issue - currently of particular concern in social anthropology - is that of analysing the inter-relationship of a local population and an encapsulating political structure and how this is articulated by the interacting individuals involved (cf. Boissevain and Friedl, 1975).

Local government in England has recently undergone a period of considerable change, in which the reorganization of 1974 may be seen as the most spectacular upheaval among several more gradual transition processes. Two particular developments have had a great effect on people as the subjects of local government authority; these have evolved in parallel fashion since the Second World War, yet they perhaps appear somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, local government has become increasingly remote from citizens, but on the other, it has an increasing impact on their daily lives. These trends can be seen to have given rise to two equally paradoxical responses: firstly, the feeling of being governed by 'faceless bureaucrats' and subjected to decisions made outside the local area has led to a sense of powerlessness, unwillingness to get involved in local politics, and a general decline of interest in local government affairs. Such responses are documented in several critical, even despairing, accounts of the paucity and 'poor quality' of candidates

at local elections (for example, Sharpe, 1960; Green, 1974). The second response has perhaps developed somewhat later than the first, but it is equally threatening to the effectiveness of local government. This is the widely observable reaction against the increasing penetration of governmental decisions - both local and national - into all areas of social life, and it has taken the form of protests, demonstrations and direct intervention by sections of the public who feel their interests are ill-served by local government.

In response to both these trends, but perhaps particularly to the latter, mechanisms for allowing the public to become involved in decision making are being introduced into many areas of public life formerly governed by elected representatives alone. In the context of local government, the emphasis now given to these official public participation procedures would seem to imply a recognition on the part of the authorities of the need both to re-awaken local interest and to incorporate vociferous opinions into their policies. Cynical observers may suggest that democracy only gives rise to effective government when large sections of the population - some would say the majority - remain unresponsive and uninvolved. Whether or not this is true of English local government remains to be seen, since the public participation process has only recently been introduced.

It is in the sphere of planning that public participation procedures have been most fully developed. Planning is of its nature an inherently political activity, involving conflicting ideologies. Moreover, planning now involves all aspects of local government operation and the County Structure Plan includes every area subject to County and District Council jurisdiction: education, housing, transport, industry and land-use. Thus, it is above all through planning that local government control is exercised, and responses to planning must be seen as an important aspect of local political activity.

The present system of local government in England, therefore, offers two major channels for the communication of local-level views to the authorities: the formal system of elected representation (the Parish, District and County Councillors) and the official procedures for public participation in planning (public meetings, the opportunity to submit opinions on planning proposals etc.): beyond this are informal and unofficial modes of action, such/^{as} direct protest or non-co-operation. The social science literature and studies of local government in England give many accounts of leadership, councils and decision making (e.g. Rees and Smith, 1964; Newton, 1973) and recently there has been a surge of academic interest in the phenomenon of public participation in planning (e.g. Dennis, 1970; Davies, 1972). The social processes involved in each type of activity have been documented and analysed for different localities. Yet the inter-relationships of these modes of political action have not been fully investigated. In general, studies of one make no more than passing allusion to the other. I believe that this separation, although convenient for analysis, is not an adequate framework for a real understanding of political activity at the local level, for the choice of channels itself may be significant. It is important to ask why a particular means of expression is selected by different people or in different circumstances; what implications the chosen mode has for the outcome of political activity, and whether the availability of alternative types of action affects the strategy adopted. By an anthropological study of a single locality I hope to show how these various processes are related to each other and to the structure and resources of the society concerned.

This, then, is an analysis of political processes at the most local level. I investigate the degree to which political power is available in a small community apparently controlled almost entirely by external authorities and I explore the means by which individuals and sets of interacting individuals achieve power and the uses they make of it. Specifically, I aim to explain how a degree of local autonomy can

be retained within the constraints of both the superordinate authorities and the local social system.

The data on which the thesis is based come from a small town in Cleveland County in North-East England, which I shall call Bridgeham. For several reasons Bridgeham proved particularly suitable for this investigation. Firstly, with a population of just over 3,000 it was small enough to be studied by traditional anthropological methods. Although considerable use was made of standardised interviews and the results of a random-sample survey of Bridgeham and five other places in Cleveland (see Appendix), the main foundation of the fieldwork was participant observation and the use of informal methods of data-collection. Secondly, Cleveland County was one of the first authorities to introduce official public participation into its planning procedures, so the use of these channels could be observed during fieldwork. Thirdly, there was a Parish Council in Bridgeham, which allowed investigation of elected representative activity on the local level, and fourthly, the socio-economic structure of the population showed considerable internal variation, with a wide range of occupational, educational and migratory characteristics. This made it possible to examine political activity in a variety of types of social situation and among individuals with very different social experiences. Thus, many dimensions could be incorporated into the study. A final advantage of Bridgeham for the purposes of this investigation was that the town was not in the throes of any political crisis at the time. Since much of the anthropological literature on local politics concerns elections, disputes and other dilemmas (e.g. Barth, 1956; A. Mayer 1966), I must admit that during the fieldwork period I occasionally found myself wishing that something would 'happen' in the local political arena. In retrospect, however, I feel that a study of day-to-day processes and repetitive events is equally

as valuable as an account of unique affairs which are highly specific to a particular locality, and it also may be a more useful basis for comparison.

2. The analytical framework

The analytical framework of the thesis is largely that evolved by F. G. Bailey in his book "Tribe, Caste and Nation" (1960). Although this is a relatively early work in political anthropology I have found no better framework within which to present an analysis of political processes and the inter-relations of power at the local level. I do not adopt everything which Bailey proposes - for example, I omit his emphasis on social change - but the essential elements of his analysis are followed in the thesis.

Bailey moves explicitly from a structuralist to an actor-oriented view of society:

"Structure. . . . is of course an abstraction, a set of generalizations abstracted from regularities of behaviour. It is possible to use such a structure as a model, and to 'set it working' while assuming that other factors are 'equal' and do not affect the working of the model. This is, so to speak, to work upwards towards further and more remote abstraction. I have not done this: I have looked downwards and related structure to the realities of behaviour - in other words I have considered as many variables as possible" (Bailey, 1960, p. 238).

Taking structure to be "a system of logically consistent regularities of behaviour" (*ibid*, p. 243) which can be seen as essentially enduring, Bailey moves to the dynamic level through an investigation of the inconsistencies and contradictions, which he interprets as evidence of social change. As the analysis proceeds, attention is increasingly focussed on individual actors in order to investigate how their choices affect the continuance or demise of the social system.

Bailey's adoption of a framework which is in effect a synthesis of structuralist and actor-oriented approaches, and which finally emphasises the 'bridge actions' linking different sub-structures, is a direct response to the complex situation he found in the Orissa Hills, where the penetration of external forces into the local situation was so constant a factor that he no longer wished to view these as intrusions; on the contrary, he maintains that

"The effort should not be made to hold other things equal, and invite the reader to grant a gentleman's agreement to disregard 'outside' factors, on the ground that they manifestly belong to a different system " (ibid, p. 248).

Indeed, Bailey found that the influence of external factors on the local situation resulted in a mixture of political alignments - to tribe, caste and nation - which required the incorporation of changes beyond the village into the analytical framework. Thus, he writes

"The village of Baderi has been the starting point for an investigation into political systems which far transcend the village. I have found the village to be the best vantage point from which to survey these systems, and from which to analyse the way in which change is taking place. Events in the village provide a text, in the commentary upon which the wider systems are unfolded. The village is not an isolated whole in itself: in a political enquiry it has been merely a convenient field of observation, where several political systems can be seen at work and impinging upon one another" (ibid, p. 269).

The village is therefore the arena in which the political struggle can be observed. Political activity in this case is moulded by the co-existence of several different political systems, each of which can be seen as a structure, analysable as both a static and dynamic model, but within which individual actors choose the strategy which they see as being to their own political advantage.

The notion that anthropological studies of communities may have wider implications in terms of more general social processes has been advocated by other writers than Bailey. Wolf, for example, believes that small-scale social groups in complex society should be viewed as "the local termini of a web of group relations which extend through intermediate levels from the level of the community to that of the nation" (Wolf, 1956, p. 1065). And this approach has been particularly emphasised recently in the context of European anthropology. Thus, Boissevain, in his introduction to a recent collection of papers, says of the studies "They do not focus on local communities as objects of research in themselves. Most are 'village outward' studies. The authors have used the small community as a scientific niche from which to examine problems of wider relevance" (Boissevain, 1975, p. 10). However, Bailey's formulation of the framework for studying a small community in relation to the larger structure remains the most explicit

Since the problem involved in my own data concerns the inter-relationship of different levels of political groupings and different means or political expression, the analytical approach advocated by Bailey seems eminently suitable. Like Bailey, I am concerned with the points of articulation between different structures and with individual choices or political strategy. I wish to keep the structural models as close as possible to the actors' viewpoints and yet not focus entirely on individual decision making. My analysis tends more towards an actor-oriented than a structural approach, but elements of both are present.

The structure of local government is clearly a major influence on local political activity, yet an analysis of this hierarchy, however detailed, is insufficient to explain how the system actually operates. For, as Vidich and Bensman have so pertinently observed,

"Politics, whatever the social and economic background of the groups involved, expresses itself through individuals"

(Vidich and Bensman, 1968 p. 109).

Complete understanding can therefore be achieved only by combining analysis of the local government structure, the actors' perceptions of this as a set of constraints and opportunities, and also of the inter-personal relations involved in the political process. It is important, however, to be aware that these distinctions are purely analytical. As Mitchell has stated in a different context, the three ways of interpreting social behaviour - the structural, categorical and personal orders of interaction - "should not be looked upon as three different types of actual behaviour, but rather as three different ways of making abstractions from the same actual behaviour so as to achieve different types of understanding and explanation." By this argument, therefore, there can be no opposition of structural and personal links, but only different ways of subsuming the same data into explanatory frameworks" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 20). Most analyses of English local politics have stressed the structural and categorical aspects; whilst not neglecting the importance of these, I will give more emphasis to the personal order and to the interpersonal relations and individual behaviour involved in the political process.

The contention that the structure of local government may offer opportunities to local politicians as well as imposing constraints on their activities is another point which is important in my approach. I am concerned here to explore the inter-relations of the external structure and local behaviour, without making any a priori assumptions about the nature of this interaction. Epstein, in outlining some of the problems of studying an African urban community, writes that

"While the social life of communities is being continuously moulded and affected by external forces, the social structure of these communities is also important in determining how these external forces will be received" (Epstein, 1964, p. 102).

This is an important point. It is not necessarily the case that a single structure imposed on a variety of social groupings will result in a uniform response. The operation of national legislation and local government in England creates a tendency towards increasingly uniform conditions, yet there is clearly some scope for differential responses to the larger structures, which may be treated as resources capable of manipulation by small-scale groups and individuals. There can, perhaps, never be equality in the mutual influence of nationally-based structures and small social groups, but there is usually some degree of reciprocity. In the context of rural development, Long has pointed out that

" . . . peasant political mobilization has in some instances led to radical changes in agrarian policy. Yet even if peasants do not organize to oppose the state in this way but instead collaborate with government-sponsored programmes, this itself is evidence that they perceive some advantage in helping to reinforce a pattern of change already initiated "

(Long, 1977; p. 188).

Thus, I will examine the resources of the population concerned and the way in which local politicians can achieve a degree of autonomy for the community - and power for themselves - by influencing decisions made elsewhere.

In his later work Bailey has suggested that every political structure must adjust to other structures, both those within it and those outside it. The smaller structures he describes as being 'encapsulated' in the larger ones, yet each forms part of the environment of the other and Bailey maintains that "The arrows of

causation between a political structure and its environment point both ways" (Bailey, 1969, p. 146). In the ensuing analysis, I intend to follow Bailey's suggestion and treat the external forces of local and national government control as part of the environment in which local political activity takes place; they will not be assumed to be of any more inherent influence than the other factors to be considered and, like them, they will be taken to be open to manipulation and change.

Within the general approach of Bailey's framework, three concepts are of major importance to the analysis - politics, power and brokerage. The definitions adopted of these clearly affect their use as tools of analysis and my use of the terms will be examined in detail in the second chapter of the thesis. Here suffice is to say that I adopt the definition of politics formulated by Easton (1959) and that of power as expressed by Adams (1975 and 1977); taken together, these designate political power as the ability to make or influence/^{decisions} which affect the social group. They have been selected because they allow both politics and power to be seen as phenomena which can operate at any level of social interaction, individual or collective, and can therefore be used in analysing both structural and interpersonal processes. They also take account of the fact that much political power is exercised outside the immediate locality. Furthermore, my use of these concepts does not require the rigid separation of politics and power from other aspects of social life and hence will allow both formal and informal political activity to be incorporated within the same analytical framework. Brokerage - which I define in essentially Barthian terms as profit-making enterprise pursued during mediation - is given a central place in the analysis of the mode of articulation between

different levels of authority, the accumulation of power by certain groups and individuals and the relation of official and unofficial political action.

Other analytical concepts also recur throughout the analysis. In connection with the official/unofficial differentiation a distinction is drawn between legitimacy and competence as sources of power. Legitimacy I take to be ascribed and competence achieved and I demonstrate that the source of political power has an important bearing on its exercise. Secondly, much of the data presented here were collected within a social network framework (see Appendix). This aspect is perhaps not fully exploited in the thesis, but many of the relationships activated in local politics are expressed in network terms and particular emphasis is given to the importance of networks as a means of access to political resources, the value of weak as opposed to strong ties in a political context and the manipulation of personal links. Variable political success is presented in terms of the resources a person can bring to bear in any political contingency. Finally, in moving from the analysis of corporate activity to the level of individual behaviour, where brokerage operates, considerable use is made of the dialectical relationship between the individual and the group as posited by Murphy (1971).

It remains to give a brief outline of the structure of the thesis and give some explanation for the order of presentation. Essentially, following Bailey, I move from a structural view of the political system and of the local population to an examination of the Parish Council as a body which articulates their interaction and then on to

an analysis of interpersonal behaviour as the dynamic force in local politics. Particular cases are given throughout as illustrative examples.

3. The order of presentation

In the first chapter I examine the development of English local government, emphasising its more recent evolution and its present structure. This chapter is largely based on literary evidence and is political, rather than anthropological in orientation. Firstly, I give an account of participation, which classical theorists saw as central to democratic decision making, yet which is the subject of much debate among contemporary writers because of the problems involved in its implementation. There follows a section on representative democracy, which accounts for the failure of local government in recent years to stimulate public interest and involvement. Elected representatives apparently no longer reflect the socio-economic characteristics of their local populations, nor do they adequately communicate with their electors. I then examine the possibility of participatory democracy, taking the case of planning as an example of the difficulties inherent in the introduction of increased public participation. Both from theoretical writings and the empirical evidence it emerges that public participation tends to favour those of higher socio-economic status, whilst the attitudes of those in authority serve to reduce the impact of local opinion. However, from this review of the literature I argue the need for local-level research and the avoidance of gross generalisations in relation to public participation procedures. These two sections may be seen as the background to the two main forms of political expression outlined above: elected representation and participatory procedures, and both are seen to have drawbacks in practice. The final section of the chapter

gives a brief account of local government reorganization and outlines the minimal official role of Parish Councils. Although their former powers had been greatly reduced by the time of reorganization, the research of the Royal Commission of Local Government emphasised the need for local-level councils. Due to the politicization of reorganization, however, Parish Councils were eventually virtually dismissed and local government became even more remote from citizens and difficult to understand. This chapter places the thesis in the context of other studies of local politics in England and also attempts to locate the study in relation to current theoretical ideas and public thinking on the nature of democracy and the role of local government.

Chapter II comprises a brief account of what I see as being the contribution of anthropology to the study of local political activity and a detailed examination of the three central analytical concepts - politics, power and brokerage; this is a statement of my understanding of these concepts and of my proposed use of them.

In Chapter III the first three sections comprise descriptive material about the parish of Bridgeham, its regional location, historical development and the socio-economic composition of its present population. With the expansion of employment opportunities in Teesside, Bridgeham has become a residential area for professional and managerial commuters. There has been an enormous growth of population over the last decade and most of the in-comers are mobile, high-income young families. However, there is a core of long-standing residents and a large council estate and the population as a whole is very mixed in terms of length of residence and socio-economic characteristics; several of the housing areas reflect these differences, though perhaps not to quite the extent as is held to

be the case locally. The next section attempts to assess the degree of local involvement and concern for the immediate environment. Despite the short residence of many people, voluntary organizational membership is high; but this does not reflect, as other observers have found, the in-coming population taking over local institutions: when we look at the organizations which are based in the town itself the membership is found to be drawn from all areas of Bridgeham. Furthermore, both old and new residents and people from all socio-economic categories are interested in the conservation of the old town centre. The local voluntary associations serve to stimulate an interest in the environment and town affairs, but only three of them are involved in political matters in any sustained way: the Civic Society and two Residents Associations, and these are singled out for special attention in the following section. The Civic Society exercises considerable influence within a rather restricted range, being mainly concerned with preservation; one of the Residents Associations has broader interests but is less powerful and the other operates only on an ad hoc basis and mainly on one of the new estates. I then examine public responses to planning as manifest by the use of the official channels such as commenting on plans, attendance at public meetings, etc. In general this is low in Bridgeham, and closer investigation shows that it is not related to the socio-economic differences evident in the population. This may be partly explained by the lack of contentious planning issues at the time of the study, but I argue that it is also due to some extent to people's perceptions of the system and their lack of political efficacy. Importantly those who have a favourable attitude towards public participation are the few who have experienced direct interaction with officials. In the final section of the chapter I draw together several indicators of the

local importance of the Parish Council, which is seen by the population to be both open to local opinion and influential with higher levels of authority.

Chapter IV focusses on the Parish Council, its position in the local political system and its mode of operation. Although paying attention to its composition and the interaction among members, the analysis at this stage is in terms of the corporate group. In the first section I examine the location of the council in the local government hierarchy and its official role as mediator between the electorate and the District Council. Using Adams' terminology, the Parish Council is presented as being within the power domain of the higher authorities and as having power delegated by its electorate. There are, moreover, direct communication channels between the other two groups, so the Parish Council can be by-passed. In the next section, therefore, I argue that because the Parish Council's legitimate role is severely limited it seeks to establish its competence in dealing with political issues and mediating on behalf of the local population. In the third section I examine the present composition of the Bridgeham council and demonstrate that, in contrast to former councils, it comprises a variety of individuals with different social experiences and interests which reflect fairly closely the characteristics of the electorate. In its conduct of affairs and mode of decision making the council draws on the different abilities and knowledge of its members and is able to reach agreement on most matters. Also, by utilising its members' contacts with outside authorities and ^{their} knowledge of local government, the Parish Council is able to exert considerable influence and achieve recognition of its competence. Finally, however, I draw

attention to the rigid formality with which council meetings are conducted and suggest that this may imply some underlying contradiction in the way the council operates.

In Chapter V the analysis moves to the individual level and I argue that the dynamic element in Parish Council activity is individual competition for power, manifest in brokerage. Using Murphy's arguments of the conflict generated for the individual by group membership I demonstrate that there is scope for brokerage in council work by individuals exploiting the resources of the group for their own profit. The legitimacy of the formal body provides certain assets for the broker, but more important are the resources of each councillor's social network, which allow differential access to information and channels of influence which may be used in a political context. Personal networks also influence the relations among the councillors. Particularly significant is the strength of the ties, since weak ties are both more open to manipulation and also more likely to serve as 'bridges' - that is, give exclusive access to a resource - than are strong ties. On this basis I suggest that there are two brokers within the Parish Council and I focus on these in detail, showing the assets, network resources and different abilities of each to manipulate the system for personal profit. Since their niches are in some ways complementary one of the brokers can be seen to be used by the other as a subsidiary broker, or broker's broker. In the final section of the chapter I present some comparative material which emphasises the key role of brokerage in achieving local power.

In the conclusions I first of all summarise the argument I have presented and highlight how the various phases of the analysis are

inter-connected. Then, returning to the theoretical origins of the brokerage concept, I examine to what extent the brokerage described in Bridgeham can be related to changes in local government beyond the town and is a response to 'state penetration'. From this I conclude with some suggestions on the importance of local councils as a means of modifying the remoteness and omnipotence of local government authority.

CHAPTER 1

ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This chapter comprises an overview of English local government in theory and in practice. The local government hierarchy constitutes one of the frameworks of constraints (the other being the population of the town itself) within which local politicians operate. It is therefore necessary to examine the present local government structure and its development in some detail, although emphasis will be given to the more recent changes.

In the first section I examine the concept of participation, which has been seen as central to democratic decision making, but which poses several problems in practice. I then look at the representative system of local government, which should ideally be an institutionalization of participatory democracy. As such, however, it has recently declined in effectiveness, giving rise to an increased disinterest in elected representation among the majority of the population. The next section focusses on participatory democracy, taking the example of the new public consultation procedures introduced into planning as an attempt to revive local participation. From documentary evidence we find that increasing public participation involves many problems, particularly that of the apparently differential abilities of local groups to use the system effectively. The final part of the chapter lays out the recent local government reorganization and attempts to define the role of parish councils within the new structure.

1. Participation - the theoretical concept

Given that I am using a definition of politics based on the

ability to influence decision making- (see below) and that I wish to consider a wide range of behaviour - including both official and unofficial forms of action - as political, the notion of 'participation' must be central to my analysis; for political participation is not limited to leaders and officers who make decisions, but includes those who take part in discussions, express opinions, or influence decision making in any other way. Since the empirical data are presented in terms of various forms of participation it will be useful to spend some time at this stage examining participation as a theoretical concept in both classical and contemporary political thought.

In a historical sense the concept of participation is integrally bound up with the theoretical notions of democracy and citizenship. Indeed, citizenship, according to Thompson

"Is not meant to suggest merely those rights possessed by a passive subject by virtue of residing under a particular territorial jurisdiction. Nor is it meant to connote patriotism or loyalty to a nation-state. It implies an active involvement in political life "

(Thompson, 1970, p. 2).

Just what is meant by 'active involvement', however, is a central issue; for although participation has recently become a fashionable term and is currently advocated as a panacea for many of the problems of modern democracy, it has been a subject of debate among political theorists for centuries, with its roots as far back as the Greek philosophers.

Rousseau has been called the "theorist par excellence of participation" (Pateman, 1970, p. 22), because in "The Social Contract" he developed a theory of democracy in which the participation of each

individual citizen was seen as the foundation of just government. His theory did not require absolute equality in terms of wealth, only that citizens should assemble for discussion as politically equal and interdependent individuals. Far from this being contradictory, the independence of each could only be preserved by co-operation in making the decisions which affect the whole polity. Rousseau did not favour the development of formal, organized groups, because this presented the possibility of power being monopolised. Such groups as emerged should be as numerous and equal in political power as possible. He also saw participation as being educative, in that it would engender and foster awareness of the need to consider other people's views in formulating policy. In Rousseau's ideal system the participatory process would develop individual responsibility through communal decision making.

John Stuart Mill gave further emphasis to the educational aspect of public participation in decision making, claiming that activity within popular participatory institutions assisted the development of the politically-conscious individual. He advocated the benefits of local political decision making, where the greatest number would have the chance to participate and learn by the process. Unlike Rousseau, however, Mill did not insist on the requirement of political equality in a participatory democracy. He set a high value on formal education and argued that the 'wisest and best' men should be elected to office at all political levels. Such an elite should nevertheless be accountable to the population as a whole, and it was this accountability which Mill saw as the greatest obstacle in the way of achieving a stable democratic political system. According to Mill, the citizen had an obligation to become involved in public affairs - a 'social responsibility'. This ought to be manifested not only in the arenas

or local and national government, but also in such spheres as industry. From an overview of the work of these early theorists of participatory democracy, Pateman concludes that for them

"Society can be seen as being composed of various political systems, the structure of authority of which has an important effect on the psychological qualities and attitudes of the individuals who interact within them: thus, for the operation of a democratic polity at national level, the necessary qualities of individuals can only be developed through the democratization of authority structures in all political systems" (ibid, p. 35).

Pateman here is using 'democratization' as being synonymous with an increase in participation, which seems to be a valid conclusion to draw from the theories of Rousseau and Mill.

Earlier this century G. D. H. Cole set these theories in the rather different context of industrial society. Cole was concerned not only with formal politics, but with the democratization of the whole of social life and for him it was the fraternal base of the work-place which should be central to the development of a truly democratic society. Cole argued, as did Mill, that the individual learns about democracy by participating at^a/local level in associations. He wrote that "over the vast mechanisms of modern politics the individual has no control, not because the state is too big, but because he is given no chance of learning the rudiments of self-government within a smaller unit" (Cole, 1919, p. 157). Since the ordinary man spends most of his time at work and has his greatest experience of relationships of superiority and subordination in that context, Cole saw this as an important sphere in which participation could be stimulated.

Over the last decade there has been a considerable debate on the advantages and disadvantages of extending the opportunities for public participation in many areas of social life. With the increasing central-

ization of government and the rise of the national and multi-national company in industry, decision making is becoming ever more remote from the daily lives of citizens. These developments are probably to a large extent responsible for the demands for more direct participation by larger numbers of people in national politics, education, industry and planning. The recent and widespread use of the term has led two American political scientists to remark that

"If there is a political revolution going on throughout the world, it is what might be called the participation explosion . . . large groups of people who have been outside of politics are demanding entrance into the political system. And the political elites are rare who do not profess commitment to this goal"

(Almond and Verba, 1963, p. 4).

This renewed interest in public participation is founded on both a revival of classical arguments and on new reasons being put forward for increasing participation in public life. One of the most frequent justifications is the notion of 'democratic idealism': the desire to implement the ideas of classical theorists and involve as many citizens as possible in the decision-making process. This implies that the present passive majority - a phenomenon observable in any democracy - could make a valid contribution to decision making. The educative value of participation is also stressed by modern theorists as it was by Rousseau, Mill and Cole. It is argued that, given the opportunity to participate, individual talents and community-oriented personalities will be developed, which will benefit the social group as a whole. Two practical reasons are also frequently cited in support of this argument. Firstly, that increased participation would improve the effectiveness of the decision-making process by allowing a variety of views, particularly local-level views, to be considered before decisions are made. Local people can often suggest amendments or put forward constructive alternatives which may improve on the policy offered by officials. Secondly, it is suggested that greater involvement may be expected to lead to wider acceptance of the decisions and so will facilitate their

implementation. If all the alternative policies have been fully discussed the reasons for the final choice will be clear and therefore more likely to be accepted, even by those who disagreed initially. This in turn will improve the image of the decision makers, who will appear to have greater concern for the effect of their policies after having listened to the views of those involved. Participation, therefore, may be seen as a means of improving the efficiency of institutions where decisions have to be made which affect the members as a group. It will stimulate a sense of involvement and hence a greater commitment to the success of the organization. J. R. Lucas sums up such views by saying that "If everybody feels the law to be enacted by himself and manifestations of his own will, then not only is the problem of political obedience solved at a stroke, but the body politic is made immeasurably stronger and more effective " (Lucas, 1976, p. 142).

However, participation has not proved the universal solution in practice which early theorists believed it would and many contemporary observers argue against its further increase as being unlikely to benefit democratic processes. In the first place, the so-called 'libertarians' hold that the political freedom includes the right to choose between action and inaction. If people prefer to delegate powers of decision making to elected representatives rather than becoming directly involved themselves, then their freedom to choose must be protected. For many individuals active political involvement is of secondary importance to other social duties, such as work and family affairs, and has to compete for time and interest with recreational activities. Furthermore, the direct costs of participation in time, energy or money may not be felt to produce adequate returns. The

provision of participation channels, however, creates a certain compulsion to use them. Because some people are active participants others find themselves unwillingly drawn in to defend their rights and this erodes the basic democratic right to delegate power and take no further part in decision making. Thus, some would say that increasing participation holds the danger of 'politicizing' the whole of social life. According to this argument, Parry says: "There would cease to be any means to discriminate between those areas in which society and government might legitimately intervene and those where intervention would be illegitimate. The individual would then be willy-nilly a participant and constantly subject to pressure from other participants" (Parry, 1972, p. 32).

Further public participation is also rejected by a school of writers whom Bachrach calls the theorists of 'democratic elitism' (Bachrach, 1969). Robert Dahl, who is generally regarded as a liberal democrat, is sympathetic towards the ideal of equality of political power, but sees it as an impossible aim in a large-scale political system. He regards it as inherent in human nature that a relatively small proportion of members will always take up decision-making opportunities in any social organization. Democracy can therefore only operate successfully as 'polyarchy' - the rule of multiple minorities. Eckstein, in a similar vein, has argued that for a democratic system to be stable the structure of authority cannot be 'democratic' in the original sense of the word. The corollary of such arguments has been put forward by Berelson, whose functionalist view gives a positive role to limited participation and apathy in that they support the status quo by maintaining stability within the system. Too much participation, he claims, invites the

tyranny of the majority or factionalism, which are both inherently unstable (Dahl, 1961; Eckstein, 1966; Berelson, 1952).

A more practical criticism of participation is that the involvement of large numbers with diverse opinions reduces the speed and effectiveness of decision making. The proposals of non-specialists are not always useful, practicable or relevant and, as Lucas neatly puts it, "Too much information clogs the system" (Lucas, op. cit. p. 154). Participation takes up a great deal of time and the introduction of every possible argument prevents clarity of vision. Decisions often need to be made fairly quickly in order to be effective and this is not possible with a high degree of public involvement.

But perhaps the commonest criticism of participatory procedures is that they favour the development of organized groups which compete for the greatest influence over the decisions made. Thus participation may come to be dominated by small powerful associations, which are not necessarily representative of majority opinion - a danger foreseen by Rousseau himself. In the industrial context this criticism has often been levelled at small groups of radical trade unionists, and the dominance of the 'left' in student politics is similarly held to be undemocratic. In any sphere the emergence of group participation is likely to lead to a monopolization of available influence and hence make the procedure inequalitarian.

In summary, then, participation is a process which early theorists saw as being central to a truly democratic political system. Public involvement was thought to be educative, fostering awareness of community and diverse individual opinions, and was therefore seen as the most efficient means of egalitarian decision making. Some contem-

porary theorists support these views and provide other arguments in favour of participation; but others feel that participation is not a practical or ideal solution to the problems of modern democracies. Nevertheless, it is the case that the scope for public participation is being increased in several spheres of social life, one of which is the field of local government.

There have, however, been numerous problems involved in the introduction of these new rights of public participation. As Lucas comments: "Participation has come into vogue. It is on everybody's lips. But like many vogue words, it is vague. Everybody wants it, but it is not at all clear what "it" is; and would-be participators are often dissatisfied with all attempts to meet their demands" (*ibid*, p. 136). Local government in England and Wales is founded on a system of representative democracy, with few rights for public participation beyond the periodic voting for councillors. Recently there has been considerable reorganization of this structure and an increase in the statutory provision for direct public involvement. In the rest of this chapter I will examine both the old system and the new one and try to assess the degree and meaning of public participation in local politics from the evidence available in the literature.

2. Representative democracy - failure of the system

As I have indicated, much of the recent theoretical debate on public participation has revolved around two distinct concepts: classical, or participatory democracy and elitist, or representative democracy. Neither type of democratic government has yet proved perfect in practice

and both incorporate considerable administrative difficulties and certain threats to democracy itself. Styles has suggested that

"The two concepts of democracy, the classical and the elitist, present us with somewhat of a Hobson's choice. On the one hand the classical concept has the high ideals of promoting the self development of every individual through involving him in the governing process, but is practically unworkable in reality, and is open to the tyranny of majority rule. On the other hand the elitist concept has shown itself to be workable, relying on the balance between a generally responsive elite and a usually passive majority, a balance, however, that can easily be tilted in favour of exclusive minority rule "

(Styles, 1971, p. 164).

English local government is based predominantly on elected representation and several writers have drawn attention to the fact that under this system the elite is frequently unresponsive and the majority too passive (Sharpe, 1962; Lee, 1963; Newton, 1973). The balance which Styles sees as being essential to the working of representative democracy has therefore not been achieved. In this section I will examine some of the reasons for this.

The concept of local government involves a basic conflict of principles. As citizens of the state, people expect a uniform provision of services wherever they choose to live; yet as members of a local community, they wish to retain a certain degree of independence from external control and demand some flexibility in the implementation of national regulations to allow for local circumstances and preferences. English local government, with its hierarchy of councils comprising representatives elected from different sized units of population, should theoretically allow for a certain amount of autonomy and local initiative within the framework of national institutions. The councils should be an effective outlet for individual views and a means of putting democracy into practice at the most local level. The ideology

of English local government may thus be seen to stem directly from early theories of participatory democracy, particularly those of Mill. Dilys Hill expresses it as follows:

"Men learn by their direct involvement in local affairs what is possible, practical and expedient. Experience teaches them the use of power and authority, and, at the same time, shows them that this calls for consultation and negotiation. They see the claims of other people and groups and the need to justify their own actions. They also learn to curb their extravagant schemes The justification of local government as political education has had a central place in democratic reasoning from J. S. Mill until recently"

(Hill, 1974, p. 222).

Thus, it is the local unit which is held to be the means both of fostering democratic principles and of bridging the gap between national government and the interests of individuals and small groups.

The ideal of the local unit is perhaps embodied in the parish. The parish is the oldest unit of local government in the country. It was initially based on the charity of the church, yet, according to Jane Morton, "Parishes performing administrative - as opposed to ecclesiastical - functions can be found as early as the eighth century" (Morton, 1970, p. 173). After the Industrial Revolution and the growth of urban areas there was a move towards Central Boards as the most efficient means of dealing with such matters as public health. Nevertheless, the parish at that time survived and flourished: "By the nineteenth century, parish government was local government, covering about five sixths of the population in urban and rural areas alike Parishes were raising and spending an amount equal to about a fifth of the budget of national government" (ibid, p. 173). The preservation of the parishes from the encroachment of urban councils was advocated by such Victorian writers as Toulmin Smith in his books "Local Government and Centraliza-

tion" (1851) and "The Parish" (1854) because of their historical tradition of engendering the obligation to serve the local community and the sense of mutual responsibility for the well-being of their members which they fostered.

Later in the nineteenth century services improved and centralization came to be more accepted. The importance of parish government gradually declined as it was conceded that these units were too small to be efficient under the changed conditions of an urban society. Yet parishes still held an important place in the ideology of local government; they were seen as the foundations of true democracy, offering participation and political education to all their residents. Hill maintains that

" 'Localness' remained a central theme which was held to be crucial to any democratic system of local government. When reforms were suggested, in Victorian times as now, changes in boundaries were debated in terms of natural community and corporate interest. This adherence to the value of primacy of 'localness' persisted through changes in economic and social life, the transportation revolution and increasing governmental activity. The definition of localness and the idea of collections of local people responsible to themselves in their community, remains a continuing part of English thinking on democracy "

(ibid, p. 27, my emphasis).

In the 1880's and 1890's the structure of local government was changed by the establishment of urban and rural districts. Parishes remained, but their powers were severely limited and it was with the county, borough, urban district and rural district councils that formal responsibility for local government largely lay. Up to the middle of the present century interest and involvement in local government gradually declined until, during the 1960's, it became clear that some reassessment was necessary if the system was to be at all effective. How far this decline was due to the increase in size of electoral constituencies,

and the concomitant decrease in personal contact between councillors and the public, it is difficult to assess, but this may well have been a contributing factor.

Several studies carried out in England during the 1950's and 1960's demonstrate that at the time local government was failing to engender political discussion or fulfil local demands, and that those actively involved in public affairs were both small in number and also unrepresentative in social characteristics. In a study of local councillors in 1962, Sharpe found that "in ten out of every 13 county councils and in 15 out of 17 county boroughs the percentage of elected representatives in middle-class occupations is at least two times as great as in the local population" (L. J. Sharpe, 1962, p. 100). On average over one third of county councillors were also found to be in the occupational categories 'retired' and 'housewife'. Again, in 1967 research for the Maud Report on the Management of Local Government concluded that "in some respects councillors differ widely from the general population. They are much older on average. Only one fifth of male councillors are under 45. More than half are over 55. Only 12% are women. The proportion of councillors who are employers and managers of small businesses or farmers is four times that of these groups in the general population . . . manual workers . . . very unrepresented" (Moss and Parker, 1967, p. 7). Councillors also tended to be better educated than the general population. Furthermore, only half had more than six years' experience as councillors and half said they had little knowledge of council work when they first stood for election. Yet the same report found that no less than 38% of all

councillors were returned unopposed, a percentage which was as high as 69 in the rural areas.

Within the traditions of the local government system it is not surprising that councillors were older, more educated, in higher paid occupations and more likely to be male than the population in general, for up to the twentieth century these were the types of people selected as public leaders at any level - possibly what Mill described as the 'wisest and best men'. But by the middle of this century the age of paternalism and respect for the gentry or 'one's betters' was definitely over and members elected to parliament were much more representative of the social characteristics found among their constituents than were local councillors. Different socio-economic characteristics tend to engender differences of outlook, which are a barrier to effective representation. These figures, then, and particularly the lack of competition for council membership, clearly express the declining success of English local government as a democratic representative system.

Such statistics are repeated to some extent in the more detailed studies of particular localities over the same period (Birch, 1959; Stacey, 1960; Rees and Smith 1964), and it is from these monographs that we get some indication of the reasons for the failure of local government as a participatory system. In his study of Glossop, Birch suggests that the centralization of industry and social services and the development of two main national political parties are the key to the decline of community identification and action:

"These two developments have inevitably had a disintegrative effect on local community life . . . Most of the important decisions regarding the economic, political and social well-being of the small towns are now made in the head offices and government departments . . . people

may happen to be friendly with their neighbours but are no longer organically linked to them by bonds of mutual dependence "

(Birch, op. cit. p. 2).

Thus, in Glossop, Birch found that 56% of his informants said they had no interest in local politics and 64% said they rarely discussed the subject. The decline of interest in local affairs was exemplified by the fact that formerly the political parties had to select their candidates for election from many applicants, whereas by the time of the study they were having difficulty in persuading anyone suitable to stand for the council. Birch writes that "The main motive for participation in local politics has always been a mixture of the desire to serve the local community and the desire to gain prestige in the local community, and the main reason for the growth of apathy is almost certainly that the local community is no longer the focus of interest that it was" (ibid. pp. 115 - 6). Birch attributes this decline of interest to the increasing mobility of the Glossop population - one third were not born there - and particularly to the fact that the leaders of industry, formerly the people who filled the council seats, were generally not local and had little interest in town affairs. People from outside are less likely to wish to serve the town and are also less interested in the local prestige which public service brings. Moreover, local residents were not so certain as before that they would live their whole lives in Glossop and tended to look outwards to other opportunities, rather than concern themselves primarily with local affairs. The effects of such changes on the town council were great and Birch is not optimistic about future participation in Glossop:

"At present it seems that the membership of the council is maintained not by the enthusiasm or ambitions of the potential candidates, but by the perseverance of the party leaders in seeking candidates . . . the members

obtained by such a process are not likely to restore the prestige of the council to any great extent. In consequence the task of finding candidates is likely to become increasingly difficult " (ibid. p. 123).

In a study of Barking Borough Council, Rees and Smith found that, as in Glossop, there was no competition for council membership; indeed, "many of them had to be practically press-ganged into letting their names go forward as candidates" (Rees and Smith, op. cit. p. 173). Similarly, there seemed to be little prestige involved in service on the council, with half the members denying that they enjoyed high status in the eyes of the local community and claiming that in fact the amount of work they did was neither realised nor appreciated by the majority of people. Yet Rees and Smith did find a certain esprit de corps among the Barking councillors:

"Membership of the group affords certain satisfactions. If the outside world does not fully appreciate a councillor's work, his colleagues do. Whatever their differences the members have a basic respect for each other - they are united in the knowledge that they are doing a necessary and worthwhile job . . . The councillors seek prestige not so much in the eyes of the general public but in the eyes of their own colleagues in the group . . . The Town Hall is the best club in Barking " (ibid. pp. 78 - 9).

Rees and Smith conclude that the satisfaction deriving from membership of the group and from the work involved is the main reason why many of the members remain on the council. Although these authors make working on Barking Council sound relatively pleasant, however, such public lack of interest is a far cry from Rousseau's ideal of community discussion and decision making.

/ Unopposed candidates at council elections, low polls and a general lack of interest in and knowledge of the affairs of local government on the part of the public are all symptomatic of the failure of the local representative system to stimulate the high level of participation upon which its legitimacy as a decision-making procedure ultimately rests.

Green is particularly scathing on this point:

"Since the war local government has not actively involved many people in more than once-yearly voting. Few people attend council meetings. Few attend ward party meetings. Few attend election meetings. Yet the system continues. The democratic mechanism which allows such minimal public involvement is generally called representation or representative government "

(Green, 1974, p. 6).

In seeking reasons for the apparent failure of representative democracy to stimulate meaningful participation among the electorate, a major factor frequently cited is the remoteness which has become associated with council activities and this is usually put down to inadequate communication. Hill is particularly adamant that lack of communication is a barrier to participation:

"Participation in democratic government is (also) dependent on understanding the issues involved. Information is essential. Democratic theory places great emphasis on the need for channels of communication . . . For the majority of people, the highly organized mass media increasingly provide the sole source of informed comment on current events. The danger is, in modern times, that we may become spectators, not getting information in order to take action but merely watching the spectacle of politics "

(Hill, 1974, p. 21).

And elsewhere she states that

"In local government the tradition is one of telling citizens about decisions which have been made rather than encouraging interested people to take part in the making of policy . . . As a result, informed comment is displaced by outraged resistance on the part of particular groups "

(Hill, 1970, pp. 57 and 85).

This is the problem of lack of accountability, which was foreseen by Mill and has not yet been satisfactorily resolved. Yet the evidence from the literature is particularly clear on the point that people who serve as councillors also tend to be active in a wide range of other

social leadership positions. Birch showed how, until the major economic changes occurred in the town, Glossop councillors were also usually the largest employers, the businessmen and those in professional occupations. Each councillor in Barking held, on average, 26 leadership positions in voluntary associations and on committees of various types (Rees and Smith, op. cit. p. 58). From Banbury too, Stacey reports that in 1950 - and to a lesser extent in 1967 - a relatively small number of individuals filled the official roles and committees of voluntary associations in political, religious and leisure activities (Stacey et. al. 1975, p. 120). This overlapping membership of local councils and other voluntary bodies is reported over and over again in empirical studies. As Hill puts it, "Councillors stand at the centre of a network of local groups. They belong to local organizations and they hold official positions on a number of public bodies. They are the joiners par excellence. These leading members of the community stand out, both because of the sheer number of positions they hold and because they are involved at the centre of events " (Hill, 1970. p. 90).

The possibility therefore clearly exists for communication between councillors and electors in a number of different social situations. These channels are, however, apparently not used effectively for the passage of information between the two parties: electors still feel the councils are remote, so that many (a majority in some areas) do not even participate in the most minimal way, by voting at local elections; and councillors still do not adequately sound out public opinion prior to making policy decisions and are then faced with heated protests at a later stage. Several reasons may be suggested to explain this disparity between the existence of potential communication channels and the ineffective use actually made of them.

Firstly, the very fact that councillors sit on many committees and perform official roles in voluntary associations tends to favour the development of governing elites in local affairs: the same people holding positions of authority in a range of social fields. Communication within this elite may be very good, but there is likely to be a degree of social distance between them and the ordinary association members. Secondly, as councillors have been demonstrated to belong to a fairly limited socio-economic section of society, the associations they join, although numerous, will tend to attract members of similar socio-economic status and interests. Hence, whilst councillors may be coming into contact with large numbers of people through their associational activities, this does not necessarily give them access to a wide range of opinions - indeed, it is highly probable that those most likely to disagree with them will not be included in their circle of organizational co-members. (This argument applies equally to councillors at either end of the occupational status spectrum). Voluntary organizational activity will, therefore, only give the council as a whole a means of sounding public opinion if between them the members belong to a complete cross-section of the types of organizations to which their electorate belong.

Recognition of inadequate communication has recently given rise in many areas to the establishment of 'surgeries', where councillors are available to their electorate for official consultation on personal or public problems. This latter development has been of some benefit in improving the exchange of information, but it does not solve the third problem in this area, which is that the onus of initiating communication apparently always rests with members of the public. Although councillors

are usually available to their electorate by some of the means mentioned, or, failing these, at least by virtue of residence in the locality, it is the electorate who must create opportunities to present their problems and make their views known. Apart from election times - when often, as we have seen, no canvassing is required - it is rare for a councillor to approach the electorate himself and ask for their views. It seems, then, that more than the mere existence of communication channels is necessary for an adequate exchange of views between councillors and constituents and that poor information-flow is indeed a major problem in local government.

Besides inadequate communication, a further important reason may be suggested for the apparent public unwillingness to participate in local government affairs. This is the feeling, commonly expressed, that the councillors themselves have very little power to get their own opinions acted upon, either because of the strength of party political organization, or because of the dominance of the officers. These two phenomena are to a certain extent inter-related, in that both are dependent on the fact that local council work nowadays covers some of the most important aspects of public life, both in terms of the large budget involved and of the penetration of the influence of local government into the lives of all citizens. Matters such as education, health services, housing and large-scale planning today all involve huge sums of money and the decisions made on these by local councils can have both far-reaching and long term effects on the inhabitants of their areas. This has imposed certain procedural conditions on councils which were perhaps not envisaged by the early advocates of participatory decision making.

The influence of national party politics is crucial to many policy decisions at the local level and, particularly where party majorities are narrow or basic ideologies are involved, voting along

party lines is rigidly enforced. As most councillors represent areas containing people of various political persuasions, party divisions make it impossible for them always to satisfy all their constituents' demands or adequately represent the whole locality. From my own study I found that councillors themselves are divided in their opinions as to the advantages of the party system operating at the local level. Some feel that it reduces the flexibility of the structure too much to cater for local variations, whilst others maintain that the volume of work undertaken by councils would be an impossible task without the guidelines of party policy. Whatever the merits and demerits of the system, it is the case that at present Independent councillors have little power in policy-formulation and that in some situations effective representation is definitely reduced by party-political alignments.

The scale of the work of local government has also vastly increased its complexity, with the result that many of the decisions required of councillors demand technical knowledge of financial forecasting, building construction, population statistics, etc. Although councillors have been shown to have above average education, they are, nevertheless, unpaid volunteers and are unlikely to have the specialist competence to make the judgements required unassisted. They therefore, rely heavily on the local authority officers - the architects, engineers and accountants - to present them with understandable facts on which to base their decisions. The presentation of this technical information is clearly not value-free and the result is that the officers have a great deal of influence over the decisions made. It is a frequent criticism of local government today that councillors merely rubber-stamp policies worked out by officers on matters beyond their own technical competence.

Whether they are accused of remoteness, party dogmatism or technical incompetence, local councillors are clearly not fulfilling the role of representatives of the people in a way which justifies the important place allocated to them in the ideology of English democracy. The characteristics a representative ought to possess necessarily depend on the job he is expected to perform and part of the problem is almost certainly that the role of the democratically elected representative is never clearly defined. As Hill says, "Today the idea of the representative covers a very broad spectrum, from a board of directors to watchdogs, and with demands for intellectual abilities, managerial skills or the right to speak for social classes or special interests " (Hill, 1974, p. 138). The result is diverse interpretations of their role by councillors themselves. Hill believes these fall into three main categories. The majority, she says, see themselves as 'trustees', who must listen to the advice of the professional officers, but in the end make decisions based on their own judgements. It is usually the older and long-serving councillors who interpret the role as one of trusteeship. Others, particularly the younger and newer councillors, feel they are more in the nature of 'delegates', who must represent their constituents' interests even when these are contrary to their own judgement. The third category are found chiefly in the poorer wards and they act mainly as 'welfare officers', spending a great deal of time on individual cases, rather than on more general matters (ibid. pp. 140 - 1).

Given this variety of demands made upon councillors and the lack of official definition of their role, such divergent interpretations are to be expected. Hill herself, however, is quite clear as to the meaning of representation within the democratic structure: "Although

councils need not be an exact replica of the general population they should reflect significant sections of it. Currently they fail to do this . . . Nor does representation mean just a passive reflection of the public (however accurate) since the representative must be capable of taking action, of governing " (ibid, p. 137). In other words, representation must be positive, an active force for democracy, if it is to stimulate the public interest and participation upon which its success depends.

Thus, from a variety of sources it is possible to document the failure of the representative system over recent years. The system continues, but it is no longer apparently serving as a means of expression for local political views. The 'apathetic majority' is a phenomenon frequently cited as a cause of the demise of effective local government, and certainly the empirical evidence of lack of interest in council affairs and a paucity of candidates for election would support this view; but I believe there is another and more adequate explanation. For throughout the same period, and particularly more recently in the late 1960's and 1970's, there has been a noticeable increase in other types of community action. Voluntary organizations, including educational, charitable and leisure associations, have increased greatly in both number and membership (the Adult Literacy Campaign, Shelter and Womens Aid all originated in this period); and more recently still, civic and amenity groups and conservation societies, concerned specifically with the local environment, have been established in many areas. There has also been a proliferation of protest movements on both local and national issues. Boissevain writes that "Increasingly individuals and groups are forming specialized coalitions to check the progressive reduction of local autonomy " (Boissevain, 1975 p. 14), and Murphy

has expressed these changes in more global terms:

"It is possible to state that the ideology of democracy and freedom is strengthening every year in this country (America) and elsewhere in the world. Populations, or segments of populations, are making demands for autonomy and self-determination that were unthinkable only two or three decades ago, and they are getting at least part of what they want "

(Murphy, 1971, p. 152)

Thus, in the last few years people have apparently become increasingly prepared to protest in public, demonstrate their views and demand that their opinions be taken into account.

I would argue that such developments demonstrate that there exists within the population both a willingness to take on public service and a climate of concern for the local community and its environment. It may be, therefore, that rather than a decline of interest in public affairs per se or a refusal to undertake meaningful participation (the conclusions generally drawn from the figures on local government matters), the situation is one in which the available potential for participation has been turned aside from formal politics and has been channelled instead into informal activity. One must therefore ask why the local government structure has been by-passed in this way and why the interest and energy evidently available in the community have been utilised in what might be termed this 'parapolitical fashion.¹ The failure of the established system is at least partly to blame,

1. Easton applies the term 'parapolitical' to any organization which makes binding decisions for its members: "Political systems may be identified at different levels of inclusiveness, from the parapolitical system of a voluntary organization, to a municipality, province or state . . ." (Easton 1965, p. 181). In my opinion this blurs the distinction between the truly political and the parapolitical. Here I wish to reserve the term for behaviour which influences the whole social group, not just the members of an exclusive organization. For example, I would not include a Youth Group's decision to hold a jumble sale; but a Civic Society which manages to prevent demolition of buildings, thus affecting the environment of the public beyond its own membership, would, by my definition, be acting in a parapolitical fashion. In contrast to political activity, parapolitics may be defined as activity within certain limited spheres of interest, or which is only episodic in occurrence.

but the climate of protest also led to the realisation that these alternative means of expression could be more effective than the channels of democracy. This was the period of Civil Rights marches and student sit-ins, of non-co-operation and rent strikes. There was a growing realization that the lengthy processes of bureaucracy could be circumvented by well-organized and sustained protests. The media coverage of such activity increases its impact on the general public, particularly where the action has a successful outcome. The result is a self-perpetuating process, whereby each publicised success encourages further protest. As what I have termed parapolitical activity grew in volume, 'populism' and 'grass-roots democracy' became fashionable phrases. But perhaps the most coherent political demand to emerge from this period was for more, and more direct, participation,

Perhaps partly because the public has insisted on making its views heard to such a great extent, official channels are now being opened for public participation at earlier stages of the decision-making procedure. Changes in English local government have been greatly influenced in this sphere by American ideas on participatory democracy, which developed in the 1960's out of the Civil Rights movement and the huge Urban Renewal programmes of that time. As Federal money was poured into the cities the feeling grew that the underprivileged sectors of the population who were the chief recipients - the poor, the black, the immigrants - should have a greater say in how the money was spent. Although the attempts of the new system to involve citizens in decision making have been heavily criticised by some who observed their effects (Rossi and Dentler, 1961;

J. C. Davies, 1966; Wilson, 1968), it is from the American experience that we have adopted such terms as 'neighbourhood council' and 'community politics', which express the very small-scale nature of current popular thinking on democracy.

The form of participation being demanded today is thus, to some extent, taking on the meaning attributed to it by Rousseau, Mill and Cole; that is, of non-specialists playing an active and accepted part policy-formulation, rather than, as in recent years, the citizenry merely electing representatives and later trying to fight for the reversal of those decisions with which they disagree. Participation has become established to the extent that we now have students on university courts (though I in no way attribute the virtual cessation of student protests to this fact alone), worker participation in certain industries and the mushroom growth of community action groups. In English local government, however, the introduction of increased public participation has been a slow process and one which has apparently met with only mixed success. The following section contains a discussion of the literature on this subject and will highlight some of the problems involved.

3. Participatory democracy

(a) The example of planning

Within local government it is into the sphere of planning that public participation procedures have been introduced in the most developed form. This is a reflection of current feelings that people should have the right to determine the shape of their physical and social environment and also of the fact that it is in planning matters that elected representation, possibly because of the size of constituencies at County and District

Council level, has proved particularly unsatisfactory. As Green says, "Planning, more than all the other local services, requires an input of uniquely local resident preferences, a political mechanism which is sensitive to very local factors. Little wonder that it is over planning matters that residents see the representative system at its most ineffective" (Green, op. cit., p. 12).

The Skeffington Report on Public Participation in Planning (1968) advocated increased communication between the public and planners, suggesting that the obvious gap in information and understanding could best be bridged in this way, and that planners particularly would benefit from a direct citizen in-put at an early stage. The role of the councillors was envisaged as that of explaining policy, though how policy and technical matters were to be distinguished was not altogether clear. Nevertheless, the findings of the Skeffington committee clearly substantiated the general feeling that more democratic control should be incorporated into planning procedures. The implementation of a system of public participation in planning, however, has highlighted many of the problems, both structural and perceptual, of enacting participatory democracy.

The most obvious difficulties of introducing public participation into planning are those which arise from the attempt to impose it on a pre-existing structure. In Britain, planning, whether local or regional, has long been carried out by elected representatives and appointed officials. Councillors and officers often disagree on the details of their work, but in general they assume that between them they provide a combination of local knowledge and expertise which results in the best decisions being taken. But the 1968 Planning Act required

- (a) that adequate publicity should be given to the results of the preliminary surveys and the subsequent plan produced by the local authority;
- (b) that anyone who might be expected to wish to make representations concerning the plan should be made aware of their right to do so; and
- (c) that such people should be given the opportunity to state their views and that the planning authority should consider them.

Obviously such regulations are open to a wide range of interpretations, but in substance they can be seen to impose new obligations on the local authority which had been used to formulating policy and implementing decisions as it saw best, with only the occasional public enquiry being held where protest was too determined to be ignored.

Planners are highly trained and might quite reasonably assume that they are the best qualified to make decisions within the policy of the elected representatives. Public participation involves them in considering the views of non-experts and many of them may see this as an intrusion into their professional sphere of competence. Councillors too, even those who are closely in touch with their electors' views, tend to feel that the power delegated to them at the polls means that they 'know what's best' for their local area. To impose any degree of public consultation on this structure is to question the ability of the planners and councillors and this may be resented. As has been demonstrated, the old representative structure itself was not highly successful in reflecting local views, and it has not been altered to accommodate the public's new role. The Act only requires that the local authority allows the public to state its case; there is no obligation to alter policy accordingly. Because planning is a large-scale enterprise, the need for local plans to fit into a regional policy can be used as a reason for the planners overriding any inconvenient objections; and even where account is taken of public

responses, those of large investors such as industry will usually be given precedence over the views of a handful of residents. Clearly, it is a good public relations exercise for local authorities to take public opinion into account, but where this is contrary to overall policy its repudiation can be justified. The public, therefore, is only allowed to try to influence a well-established and traditional method of decision making. As Hague and McCourt say, with reference to the process in America, "Participation has been embarked upon without regard to the political concepts involved, and . . . attempts have been made to stimulate participation while still paradoxically holding firm to elitist principles" (Hague and McCourt, 1974, p. 153).

Following from this is the difficulty which arises from the fact that public participation is a commodity which is closely controlled by the planning authority and available only on its terms. No precise definition of "adequate publicity", "opportunity" or "consider" is contained in the legislation and these crucial terms are, therefore, open to local interpretation. Participation at present is very much something which is offered by the planners to the public. It is the planners themselves who decide what information shall be given, to whom and at what stages in the process. This means that the public is largely dependent on the planners in taking up its legal rights to participate: even the issues open to public debate are to some extent those selected by the authorities. W. Harvey Cox suggests that the very formalization of participation reduces the impact of public protest (Cox, 1976, p. 187); and Hague and McCourt go even further: "Participation is to a large extent seen as being administratively expedient rather than involving a transfer of power . . . At best, then, this form of exercise is geared to improve the

technical and administrative efficiency of the system" (Hague and McCourt, op. cit., p. 153).

Another major problem arises from the structure of planning authorities, even when these make a genuine attempt to encourage participation. This is the fact referred to above as an argument against increased public involvement, namely, that the structure of officialdom allows those who are accustomed to dealing with bureaucracy and have more than average resources^{to} gain undue influence. The planners rarely go to individuals and ask their opinions, rather, the onus is on the public to make its views heard. By definition this favours the articulate, the educated, organized groups and those with particular skills in argument or public speaking. Hill suggests that "Political power and effective control of communication go together: the more influential sections of the community are the more middle-class, more educated and more organized members. The language in which discourse is conducted also reinforces the power of middle-class educated opinion" (Hill, 1974, p. 162). In other words, the middle classes speak the same language as planners and therefore have an advantage in obtaining a hearing for their views. Material resources, too, favour middle-class participants. At the lowest level, the individual with his own telephone has a great advantage over a person in a public call box when trying to talk to some elusive official in County Hall. And, as Lucas says, "It is a great advantage in running a crusade to enlist someone who has access to a duplicator, or on a grander scale to have funds to finance a full-time organizer, or an adequate research team" (Lucas, op. cit. p. 230). McKie estimates that the people of the villages and hamlets of East Hertfordshire

and North-West Essex spent £35,000 on defending their localities against the threat of the third London airport being sited there (McKie, 1973, p. 144). So participation within the present structure is likely to favour those best able to make their views heard, for whatever reason, and the most successful may be an articulate, well-organized or wealthy minority, rather than the public in general.

The other difficulties encountered in the implementation of public consultation requirements are due more to differences of perception than to obstacles within the structure itself. Firstly, from the planners' point of view, the participation of the general public in something about which the latter have no technical understanding merely prevents them from getting on with their job. Thus, participation may be seen as something to be hurried through as quickly as possible so that the planned changes can be implemented. Perhaps even more significant than the attitudes of the planners, however, are the various perceptions of participation held by the public. Some people have seized the new opportunities to participate with great enthusiasm, only to be disappointed by the results. They expected that participation would automatically mean that their opinions would be listened to and their ideas acted upon. This naturally leads to disillusionment, anger at officials and discontent with the system. Hill writes that

"Demands for more participation give rise to disquiet . . . Effective involvement takes time, knowledge, motivation and resources. Two potentially harmful results may follow. One is that the ordinary man with none of these benefits may be ignored. The other is that, even where money and skills produce effective involvement, the end result may still be frustration and alienation. One of the by-products of this participatory age is that some people, particularly those who normally take little interest in council affairs, learn only too well the real cost of being involved. Disillusionment and defeat are just as real as the costs of money and time"

(Hill, 1974, p. 155).

Yet the other side of the coin is a problem more commonly heard of. This is the so-called "apathetic majority". Even where the planning authority has taken its responsibilities seriously and made a real attempt to get the public involved, the vast majority of people are still apparently reluctant to make use of the channels provided. This may be due to satisfaction with the proposals in a minority of cases, but the fact that implementation frequently leads to criticisms of the effects suggests that in general this is far from the whole explanation.

Both these problems - expecting too much from participation and failure to get involved - stem in part from two factors associated with the decline of interest in local politics in general : remoteness and inadequate communication on the part of the authorities and the public's increasing unwillingness to operate through formal political channels. But they are also in large measure due to what I have referred to above as the cumulative and educative effects of participation. The virtual absence for so long of provision for any but the most minimal public involvement has produced a situation in which the sudden increase in participatory opportunities has led to over-reaction by a minority of individuals and lack of response from the majority of the public.

Several writers follow Rousseau and Mill in their belief that successful public participation depends on experience of the process. Thompson goes so far as to suggest that "Frequently, individuals themselves had not conceived of their interests in terms of (these) political demands until they began to participate in politics . . . Political participation, then, can create political knowledge" (Thompson, op. cit.

p. 61). In other words, although citizens may know what they disagree with when presented with an already developed policy, it is only by participating at the early stages - of policy-formulation - that they will develop their own coherent political ideology and know where their priorities lie in relation to those of other people. Thus, "The more a citizen participates, the more he is exposed to political ideas, the more political experience and self-confidence he acquires - and hence the more politically knowledgeable he becomes. At the same time the more knowledgeable he becomes, the easier it is for him to participate" (i bid., p. 62). Pateman's arguments on the cumulative nature of participation are closely founded on those of Cole in the stress she lays on participation in spheres other than formal politics, which she sees as a means of counteracting the present middle-class dominance in public participation:

"It is the lower socio-economic status groups that in the general run of things have the least opportunities for participation, particularly in the workplace. It is almost part of the definition of a low status occupation that the individual has little scope for the exercise of initiative or control over his job or working conditions, plays no part in the decision making in the enterprise and is told what to do by his organizational superiors. This situation would lead to feelings of ineffectiveness that would be reinforced by lack of opportunities to participate, that would lead to feelings of ineffectiveness . . . and so on"

(Pateman, op. cit. p. 50)

Almond and Verba have made a detailed cross-cultural study of "political cultures" and individuals' perceptions of their own ability to influence decision making. They suggest that a person who believes that he can exert influence should be called "subjectively competent". The individual's propensity to participate was found to be closely related to his subjective competence: "The more subjectively competent an individual considers himself, the more likely he is to be politically active" (Almond and Verba, op. cit. p. 236). Thus, to reverse their

argument, before people can be expected to participate, their subjective competence (i.e. their belief in their own ability to influence decisions) must be developed; for unless they believe in their own political efficacy individuals will see no point in spending time on participation. This process is what Almond and Verba call "political socialization" and they suggest that

"An individual might base his estimate of his capacity to influence the government upon direct experience with that government. Opportunities to participate in decisions might convince him of his competence, while thwarted influence attempts might lead to the opposite conclusion. Or he might base his subjective competence on more indirect evidence about the operations of the political system. He might observe others attempting to influence politics and learn from their experience, or he might learn from the estimates that he hears others make of the extent to which the "ordinary man" can influence politics. In these ways he will form his political beliefs from his observation of politics or from his exposure to others' views of politics"

(ibid., p.368).

This analysis of the effects of experience and perceptions of the system on the individual's willingness to become involved in its processes seems to be crucial to understanding one of the major difficulties of public participation in planning, namely the frequent lack of response to the opportunities offered. Moreover, Almond and Verba give statistical evidence for what Thompson and Pateman suggest - that the origins of the variety of subjective views may be rooted in non-political experience. Their data show that subjective competence is developed long before it has any political relevance. If a person has had a chance to take an effective part in decision making in his family, at school, or (most importantly, because it occurs in adulthood) in his working situation, he is much more likely to develop a sense of 'political efficacy'. They conclude that "Non-political experience with participation increases the individual's availability for an active political role and increases the likelihood that he will believe in his political influence" (ibid., p.369).

The example of planning demonstrates that there are many problems in developing a participatory form of local government. These cannot be solved by the provision of channels alone since many social factors are involved beyond the formal political sphere. Lack of experience, or at least of successful experience, in influencing decision making may to a large extent explain the low rate of public involvement in local politics. There is a large "apathetic majority", whilst those who are accustomed to making decisions in other spheres take up the opportunity to participate and often gain disproportionate influence. The public in general may need to be educated on the process of participation, and the accumulation of experience may lead to a greater success rate from the point of view of both planners and public. The fact remains, however, that far-reaching plans are being formulated and adopted now in a system with all these problems firmly embedded in it.

To highlight some of these problems, I will now examine in more detail some of the case-study literature which deals with public participation in planning, looking at how it is conceptualised by the authorities and the ways in which the public has reacted.

(b). Public participation in planning in Britain - the evidence of the literature.¹

Most of the empirical work undertaken in Britain in connection with public participation in planning demonstrates the lack of success of present methods of consulting citizens. In a Linked Research Project, sponsored by the Department of the Environment, a team from Sheffield

1. A great deal of work has been done elsewhere on public participation, notably in America; Cornelius provides a good review of this literature (Cornelius, 1975, pp.75 - 78) and also contributes to the understanding of the process of participation at the local level by his own study of Mexico City migrants. For reasons of brevity and comparability I have restricted myself to British material.

University have been observing and evaluating the procedures adopted by several planning authorities for incorporating public participation into the preparation of their Structure Plans. The data are drawn from the experiences of North-East Lancashire, Cheshire and Teesside. The Sheffield team seek to provide a series of case studies from which planning authorities can select examples and guidelines which are relevant to the local circumstances and planning problems in their own areas. The analyses are based on the assumption that the present structure of participation is acceptable, or at least that it is here to stay, and their arguments revolve around improving the mechanisms available for public participation and building upon their present form. Research has been conducted on methods of publicity - exhibitions, circulars, booklets, use of the press etc. - and on the structure and lay-out of public meetings. These have been assessed from both the planners' and the participators' point of view. They have also tried to identify the social characteristics of those who attend public meetings, For example, in Cheshire Goldsmith and Saunders found the audiences to be comprised "Very much of the middle class, male, older, long-term residents and members of voluntary groups . . . Over two-thirds had had some recent experience of meetings of a similar kind, and about one third of them contributed to the discussions at the meetings, fully demonstrating an ability to grasp and comment upon the settlement policy proposals" (Goldsmith and Saunders, 1975, p. 1). This profile of the typical participator is repeated in several areas; public meetings evidently attract a certain type of audience, which is not necessarily representative of the local population as a whole. (It is interesting to notice how remarkably similar this description of participators is to that of local councillors, given earlier). Furthermore, in

the case of Cheshire, less than 1% of the population had been to a public meeting during a four month planning exercise. They therefore warn planners against accepting the responses of public meetings as the voice of local opinion. From the findings in both Cheshire and North-East Lancashire, the Sheffield team found that the public meeting, a means of consultation frequently adopted by planners, "should be primarily regarded as a means of giving information rather than being used for information collecting or for involving people in the process of decision making " (ibid., p. 25).

Such research may be a very useful means by which planners can improve their methods of encouraging participation and learn by others' experience, but it tells us little of the effects of participation on the local community and the satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) it engenders. Goldsmith and Saunders themselves seem to recognise this shortcoming when they say "Perhaps we should have asked people why they did not visit the exhibition as much as we asked them what they thought of it" (ibid., p. 10). Although these researchers point out that public meetings are likely to be attended mainly by the so-called "middle-class" (which is not defined in the text), little indication is given of why this should be so or of how the nature of the background community shapes local responses to planning. Furthermore, no data are provided on alternative means of influence which may be being used. This approach, therefore, begs too many questions to give an adequate account of the nature of local participation.

Writers like the Sheffield team, whose approach seeks basically to improve the technicalities of implementing public consultation, do not appear to advocate any radical changes in the structure of the planning

procedure. Other observers have been far more critical of the efforts made by officials to include the public in decision making, claiming that, as Hague and McCourt suggested, there has been no real change in the outlook of planners, who maintain an elitist approach despite the new legal requirements. Norman Dennis, for example, presents a detailed study of the housing problem in Sunderland and of how the planners attempted to solve this (Dennis, 1970). His conclusions are deeply critical of the approach the planners adopted towards the slum areas. Dennis argues that planners are a homogeneous group whose values and objectives have been inculcated in the course of professional training. The local population, by contrast, comprises a variety of individuals who perceive and respond to their environment in different ways.

Here Dennis is pointing to two of the major problems of planning: firstly, that those formulating the plans are often of a very different social category from those affected by them; and secondly, that the latter are not a homogeneous group and the same plan may affect sections of the population in different ways. Plans tend to ignore the subjective evaluation of the non-physical environment and Dennis shows from his case study that there was no uniform type of response from the inhabitants, even within a slum environment. He demonstrates that for different individuals "the house represents an exceedingly large and complex range of values" (*ibid* , p. 298). Thus, what to the planners may be an identical physical environment, will be interpreted in various ways by the inhabitants. Dennis suggests that the planner would need the knowledge of the sociologist to examine all the factors which contribute to the variety of local attitudes: length of residence, family ties and distance to work may all be as important to the local population as the quality of housing; yet, in Sunderland at least, no account was taken of these factors in the slum-clearance scheme.

Jon Gower Davies, in another study of re-development in North-East England (Davies, 1972), endorses Dennis's arguments for more local-level knowledge and proposes a solution to the problem. Since the best way of finding local preferences will vary from area to area, and even from street to street, he suggests that 'decentralised offices' and 'area teams' would be a means of allowing plans to emerge from the egalitarian interaction of planners and residents. Writers like Dennis and Davies are proposing a fundamentally different approach to public participation, with emphasis on much smaller units than county or even district planning can take account of.

Davies' criticisms are based on his own investigations in Rye Hill, an area of Newcastle-upon-Tyne being subjected to substantial redevelopment. This took place before the legal requirement of public participation in planning, but at that time Newcastle had adopted its own policy on public consultation. Davies' main concern was to examine the problems which arose from the attempts of the city officials to allow the voice of local people to be heard. He shows that the planners and council officials were too ready to adopt a stereotyped picture of Rye Hill as a down-at-heel area with a poor reputation, inhabited largely by people of doubtful character (prostitutes, drunkards, criminals, etc.). Davies suggests that because they held this view, the authorities acted with a paternalistic attitude towards the area. They ruled out the idea of any meaningful form of participation taking place in Rye Hill and policy decisions were made without attempting it. It is this kind of approach which leads him to call the officials "evangelistic" - they assumed that any change in the locality could only be an improvement and that they themselves were best qualified to decide what should be done. According to Davies,

"Planners are the most highly developed form of evangelistic bureaucrat" (ibid., p. 110). He goes on to describe the way in which certain individuals did attempt to become involved by joining a neighbourhood council and trying to voice their views through this. But the attitude of the authorities gave the population a low sense of confidence in their own ability to influence decisions. There was a feeling that even though the insistence of citizens may have brought about a change in policy, such changes would only be minor and might involve lengthy negotiations. Furthermore, the structure of the meetings which were held served to create a feeling of distrust and disillusionment and this inevitably led to friction in the encounters between officials and the public. Davies concludes that, in the case of Rye Hill, "real" participation was never offered to the public because of the evangelism of the planners. The general implication of his case study is that it is far too easy for a public participation procedure to become an exercise in public persuasion. He states that

"There are the same assumptions about everyone's desire for uniform and expensive housing, and the adoption (in the new plan) of a "public relations" type of approach, an approach which relies for its validity on a notion of a "breakdown in communication" - i.e. that people's refusal to consume a particular commodity means that they don't really know how good it is and that if they did they would all be consuming it and enjoying it with great vigour and zest "

(ibid., p. 218).

The empirical material on public participation in Britain ranges over a variety of communities and different planning areas. The study done by Batley of two very different neighbourhoods both subject to change under the same planning authority, Newcastle, is therefore particularly valuable. Jesmond, a suburb inhabited by professional, middle-income people, was scheduled for "revitalization". Byker, by contrast, was an area of poor housing due for "phased demolition". Because so much

or the literature suggests that those who participate will be the vociferous and articulate, Batley sets out to answer the question of whether public participation can in fact work in areas which do not demand a say in planning. He writes that

"There is a danger that these areas could be jostled even further away from resources and consideration as the more vocal areas which have always demanded attention take full advantage of their rights under the new system. The citizen's statutory right to information and consultation means little if he doubts that his involvement can have any impact on planning "

(Batley, 1972, p. 95).

He goes on to suggest that successful participation is based on the locality's ability to organize its population, the degree to which it believes in its ability to influence and the quality of its communication with the authorities.

Jesmond was an area whose population included architects, university planning lecturers and other professionally qualified people who were more than adequately equipped to comment on the plans in a way which demanded the authority's attention. The response in Byker, on the other hand, was almost complete passivity, despite a dense network of kin ties which might have been expected to facilitate the development of cohesive community action. Even though the threat to the environment there was much greater, no effective protest was made. Local voluntary associations are commonly held to be an important source of political organization should the need arise. But Batley demonstrates that the potential value of these depends on their nature and hence varies from one area to another. In Jesmond, he says, "Residents' associations sprang up to take on this sort of role exclusively on the revitalization issue, or turned to this among other issues which faced their members" (ibid., p. 101). Yet in

Byker, although there was a high incidence of organizational membership, the kind of clubs which existed there, particularly the Working Men's Clubs, specifically rejected any political role and their members did not expect the leadership to operate beyond the bounds of traditional club activities. Only the churches and Community Association - both of which had outsiders as leaders - took on any wider interest in relation to planning.

Observation of local activity and a survey of residents' attitudes and opinions led Batley to conclude that "the sort of vigorous and organized reaction which was the response of Jesmond residents implies both a belief that the council is open to persuasion and also some knowledge of the processes of local government" (ibid., p. 99). From his survey, Batley found that, compared with Jesmond, people in Byker were "very much less politically aware and less favourably inclined to the institutions and processes of local government than were the national and Newcastle sample populations" (ibid., pp. 99). Also, the existing channels of communication were poorly developed in Byker - less than 15% of the respondents there knew the name of one of their ward councillors, compared with an average of 48% in Newcastle as a whole. Indeed, in Byker communication with the authorities was so bad that only 15% of residents had heard of the demolition plans from official sources - councillors, meetings or municipal publicity. Instead, they relied heavily on the network of local contacts, which led to the transmission of inaccurate information. Thus, there was a great difference in the amount and quality of information about official affairs possessed by the two localities within the same planning area.

This disparity in ability to communicate, absorb information and organize protest led to the planners adopting a different approach to the two areas. Jesmond and Byker were competing for the finite resources of a single authority and the official attitude towards Byker was another example of what Davies called the "evangelism" of planners in dealing with localities which are apparently unable to participate effectively. The contrast offered within this study adds weight to the argument, for Batley concludes that "Not only was it assumed that the problems and future of Jesmond were more suited to discussion by residents, but also that the residents themselves were better equipped to take part in the debate than was the population of Byker" (ibid., p. 112). Such an approach on the part of the planners reduces any sense of political efficacy which might have existed among the less articulate population and certainly the Byker residents saw little point in attempting to influence the officials. The planning authority in this case operated a uniform policy of consultation, despite clearly evident differences in the localities concerned. When this resulted in a coherent response from one area and almost total passivity from the other, great attention was given to the former at the expense of the latter. The authority apparently never considered the possibility that it was their own procedures which were at fault, or that a different approach might have elicited a more interested reaction from the people of Byker.

Another study which analyses differential participation is that carried out by Simmie in Wheatley, a parish in Oxfordshire. He too attempts to discover whether 'participants' were in any significant way different from the population as a whole in terms of social characteristics. However, in this case both participants and non-participants were residents

in the same locality and the findings are somewhat different from most. The village, with a population of 3,000, had experienced considerable recent in-migration, mainly from within the county, and contained a wide range of socio-economic groupings. Simmie described how Wheatley Parish Council, exasperated by the delays of the County Council in producing a plan for their village, commissioned one of their own. Judging by the low attendance at the parish meetings concerning the plan, it appeared that almost 90% of the population took no interest in village affairs. The reasons given were lack of time, lack of interest, and a feeling against interfering with local government processes. However, by the use of different indices, Simmie goes on to identify three distinct groups of participators in the population, together with a disinterested majority, who, despite continual press coverage and local discussion, were not aware that a village plan had been prepared.

Simmie characterises the three groups of participators as follows: 'Leaders', comprising 5% of the population, who actually worked towards the development of the plan; 'active participants', 10% of the population, who helped the leaders, and 'passive participants', 38% of the population, who were aware of the plan and had a latent interest which was expressed where their individual concerns were threatened. The remaining 47% he assumed "would react to adverse effects of the plan only if and when these impinged on their daily lives" (Simmie, 1971, p. 161). He then analyses the three types of participants in terms of the Registrar General's occupational categories (professional, intermediate, skilled, partly skilled and unskilled) and compares them with the population as a whole. Leaders were most likely to be drawn from the professional and intermediate categories, although a significant minority were unskilled. The active

participants were made up largely of unskilled, with a minority of professional and partly skilled people. The passive participants were skilled and partly skilled people. So the usual characterization of participants as being the more educated, able and affluent among the population appears to be insufficient explanation for the situation in Wheatley, since a good number of unskilled people were among the leaders and active participants. Furthermore, the proportions in the various groups of participators did not reflect the socio-economic composition of the local population: for example, skilled manual workers accounted for half the sample, yet never formed this proportion of the participants. The problem then is to explain why the minority categories were apparently more likely to become involved in local affairs than the majority.

Simmie looks in more detail at the individual characteristics and motivations of the participants. He finds that the local social status system is important even though it does not lead to the occupational hierarchy being reflected in degrees of public involvement. He points to the fact that some categories of people, for example the skilled workers, have a certain amount of status in the work context which overrides any desire to achieve status in village politics, whereas the unskilled have no status to lose, but the possibility of achieving some public recognition through involvement in local affairs. It also emerged that those who participated had fewer kinship links in the village than those who did not, either because they were recent in-migrants or local people whose kin had died or moved away. Thus, involvement could be seen as a mechanism for developing friendship networks among those with few ready-made links in the village. Simmie concludes that the fact that participants were disproportionately drawn from the extremes of the social

class spectrum may in part be due to status considerations, but that, as his data demonstrate, a wide range of factors are involved. The case study shows that the propensity to participate is based on the total social situation of each individual, including occupational status, migratory and network characteristics and the way these relate to the social structure of the local area. Categories of participants can be isolated, but these are not based on gross socio-economic variables as so many observers have assumed after studying populations of more homogeneous composition,

The body of literature on public participation in planning is growing rapidly, but as yet it is difficult to make many comparisons or draw any general conclusions. It is clear, however, that many of the drawbacks to participation suggested by political theorists are borne out by the empirical findings. Chief among these is the fact that it is those with above average education and income who tend to benefit most from public participation opportunities. There are two reasons for this: firstly, they have the organizational and material resources to mount an effective campaign, and, secondly, they have the necessary experience and ability to communicate with the planners on their own bureaucratic terms. In poorer areas the populations lack these advantages and the difference in values and attitudes between slum residents and planners reduce the chances of effective participation taking place. Planners, it seems, help those who help themselves and Green, for one, takes a harsh view of current planning attitudes:

"Planning is not a neutral instrument but a way of reinforcing the advantages held by some sections of the population and destroying those of others . . . Very roughly, planning in the cities is positive and interventionist, endeavouring to create an environment which satisfies a number of communal priorities: on the other hand, in the better-off residential areas planning is nearly always merely development control,

defending the already established from intrusive outsider market forces which make the environment less attractive for people who already enjoy it. Crossman referred to this second activity as "kicking the ladder down behind you"; a defence of privilege . . ."

(Green, op. cit., pp5 and 10).

There is probably a large measure of truth in such an assessment. A further factor which emerges from this brief look at empirical evidence, however, is that although large-scale studies based on survey work, such as the Sheffield project, tend to support the argument that participation will be dominated by the middle classes, the locality-based studies suggest that participation is a far more complex phenomenon than can be explained merely by gross socio-economic variables. The work of Dennis, Davies and Batley shows that other factors are operating as well as socio-economic status; and Simmie's study of a population comprising a variety of occupational categories demonstrates that this may not be the most important variable at all. Aside from the political conclusions and suggestions for improving the planning process, then, one fact is evident, namely that it is only at the most local level that the motivations for participation and the reasons for its success or failure can really be understood.

4. Reorganization and the role of the parish council.

I have suggested that the 1960's saw a growing dissatisfaction with the processes of local government and increasing demands for improved and alternative methods of managing local affairs. The introduction of public consultation procedures into planning was one result of this. Yet it was a long time before any major structural changes were envisaged. Buxton's comments sum up the climate of opinion at that time:

"Local government has never lacked its critics, even among those most committed to its maintenance as an institution. However, for many years whatever faults local government may have possessed did not attract the attention of politicians at national level and, despite its undoubted practical importance in people's lives, the local government system may have appeared to a casual observer to be well on the way to achieving the status of a dignified, rather than an efficient, part of the constitution "

(Buxton, 1973, p. 229).

During the late sixties and early seventies, however, increasing attention was paid to the problems of local government and it became evident that some large-scale changes were likely to be made. How far the overhauling of the machinery was a response to public pressure it is difficult to assess, for there was another reason which made change desirable, and this was one of more immediate concern to Westminster politicians than local-level dissatisfaction. As mentioned above, the financial scale and responsibilities of local government have increased vastly over recent years, so that not only are local councils now spending a large proportion of the national budget, but they are also responsible for the enactment of policies formulated at national level, by administering such services as health and education. For this reason, at least, the inefficiency of local government could no longer be tolerated.

As a result of the gradual admission that the existing system was no longer adequate, various investigations were made into the processes of local government. Chief among these was the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, presided over by Lord Redcliffe-Maud. This was set up in 1966 and reported in 1969. Commonly known as the 'Maud Report', the findings of this Commission to a large extent formed the basis of the recent changes in local government structure.

Maud's chief criticism of local government was that the structure

was out of date and no longer fitted the pattern of life and work in England. The lines of authority had been drawn up in 1888, based largely on the division of urban and rural areas, and these did not reflect the contemporary situation of interdependence between localities. Furthermore, the commission maintained that there were too many authorities in the hierarchy, resulting in the confusion of citizens as to which council was responsible for various services, and in the separation under different authorities of services which ought to be run in a closely related way, such as housing and children's welfare. Where there were single authorities responsible for all services, as in the county boroughs, these were felt to be too small in size and revenue (and therefore in technical ability) to be able to fulfil their role adequately.

Maud therefore recommended much larger-scale divisions which would be responsible for the whole range of local government services. These unitary authorities, however, should not be so large that elected representatives could not keep in touch with those affected by their policies. Maud suggested a maximum population of a million for the new authorities. In particularly densely populated areas, where units would have to be of more than a million, a second tier, working in close liaison with the first, would probably be necessary. The commission saw these unitary authorities as being based upon coherent socio-geographic areas, whose boundaries could be established by a detailed study of population movements and communications.

The research carried out for the Commission also clearly showed that most people attached some considerable importance to the identity of their immediate locality - the village, parish or group of streets. From this Maud concluded that "There must be a level of local government which fosters the pride and interest of local communities, or a vital element

will be missing from the democratic pattern" (Maud, 1969, para. 282). The election of "local councils" was therefore advocated. These would be based on the old county boroughs, boroughs, urban districts and parishes, but in the future the size of the electoral areas might be reduced to allow for the expression of the more local neighbourhoods found to be important to individuals. The main function of these local councils would be as a means of communication with the overall authority: ". . . it will be their responsibility to see that the views and wishes of their inhabitants, about any local government service, or any other matter of concern to the local community, are made known to the responsible authority" (ibid., para. 381). The local councils were also envisaged as having some extremely limited powers to deal with matters within their own areas, such as street cleaning, recreational facilities, etc. By establishing fewer, but larger and stronger authorities, the Royal Commission felt better services would be provided and the public would have a clearer view of where responsibilities lay. Through the local councils there would be an outlet for local opinions and this, it was envisaged would revive the democratic aspects of elected representation.

But at the time of its publication the Maud Report fell victim to the vicissitudes of national party politics. The then Labour Government accepted the findings of the Commission and were largely sympathetic to its proposals. A White Paper was produced and legislation to implement the scheme suggested by Maud's committee was proposed for the 1971 - 2 session of Parliament. The Conservative Opposition, however, dissented from the main recommendation of the Report, namely, that reorganization should base the future local government on unitary authorities, preferring

instead a two-tier system. In 1970 the Conservatives were elected to office and it seemed that the Maud Report would be of little significance in reorganization.

The Local Government Act, 1972, which instigated the reorganization of 1974, was based on a White Paper published by the Conservative Government in 1971. Buxton points out that the Report of the Royal Commission "ran to some 375 pages and was supported by ten major research studies. The Conservative White Paper . . . which explained the proposals later embodied in the 1972 Act, occupied a mere fifteen pages" (Buxton, op. cit., p. 232). The Conservative Government, however, was concerned to emphasize that their proposals were not so much at variance with Maud's as might seem to be the case. Although they wanted a two-tier system, the new county authorities would be larger and more powerful bodies than their predecessors and hence have much of the character of Maud's suggested unitary authorities. The Maud Report, therefore, remains significant in looking at the reorganization of local government as it eventually took place in 1974.

The Conservatives acknowledged the principles of coherent responsibility and intelligibility of Maud's unitary system, but felt that such authorities would be too large for the efficient provision of some services, which required more direct contact with the electorate than the larger units could be expected to achieve. They therefore created a two-tier system of county and district authorities¹ in which the county areas would have a maximum population of about one million, as Maud had suggested. They specifically rejected the idea that the lower tier was in any way subordinate to the

1. The metropolitan areas have not been mentioned here as they are not relevant to the case study material to be presented and I have preferred to retain as much simplicity as possible in my brief description of the local government structure.

higher authority, preferring to divide the responsibilities according to what they saw as the population-base needed for the efficient discharge of the services concerned; these were then allocated exclusively to either the larger, county, or the smaller, district, authorities. Buxton is critical of this attempt at dividing what are all essentially locally-based and interdependent functions:

"Needless to say, the element of judgement emphasized by the White Paper was prominently in evidence when the difficult task was attempted to actually dividing the various services between the two tiers. Housing is 'an essentially local service', and development control 'raises issues of close local interest'; both these functions were, therefore, allocated to the district authorities. Similar arguments might, of course, have been deployed in the case of education and the social services. Here, however, the Government found a countervailing 'advantage in having units of population large enough to provide a base for their effective organization and a high quality of service'; these functions were therefore allocated to the county authorities" (ibid., p. 241).

(quotations from the Government White Paper, 1971, Cmd., 4584).

The resultant divisions of responsibility may thus be seen to be somewhat arbitrary, with planning occupying a particularly anomalous position, a point which will be returned to later.

The New Authorities: Main Functions.

<u>County Council</u>	<u>District Council</u>
Highways	Cemetries
Refuse Disposal	Education
Traffic	Housing
Transport Planning	Markets
Weights and Measures	Refuse Collection
Town and County Planning: structure plans local plans (special cases)	Town and Country Planning: most local plans most development control
Fire ^x Police ^x Recreation ^{xx}	Recreation ^{xx}

x Subject to amalgamation with other counties
xx Concurrent powers between county and district

(Reproduced from Buxton, op.cit.p287)

Thus, although Maud's concept of larger and more efficient units has been retained, his arguments in favour of simplicity and intelligibility for the general public have been lost by the creation of these divisions. Local government reorganization was, in the end, a good deal less radical than seemed likely at the time of the Maud Report and many of the problems and dissatisfactions highlighted by the research carried out for the Royal Commission have not been solved by the new structure, which seems to many as confusing in its sub-divisions as the old one it replaced.

At the time of local government reorganization there was much heated debate on the relative merits of a one- or two-tier structure. In the midst of this discussion the fact that the Maud Report advocated the preservation, and even further creation, of a third or lower tier seems to have been ignored. The lowest level of elected representation is the parish council, parish meeting, or what Maud called the "local council". The emphasis placed on this most local level of democratic government may be seen to stem directly both from the traditions of English local government described earlier and from the findings of the Royal Commission's own research, which showed that people themselves place great value on the identity of their immediate locality. It was these local councils which the Maud Report envisaged as a counterbalance to the increasing centralization of decision making. Yet at the time of reorganization no further local councils were created and those which were in existence were relegated to a position of optional extras in the decision-making hierarchy (parish councils were retained or discontinued, according to local preference). Where they did continue to operate, parish councils were given the role

advocated by Maud, namely, to act as communication channels between local people and the higher authorities and to undertake certain minimal responsibilities with respect to the amenities of their own area.

In an examination of parish council activity before reorganization, Morton suggested that their rights and duties were often vaguely defined and subject to antiquated and irrelevant laws. She went so far as to state that "From the administrative point of view, the parish is superfluous - and nothing underlines this more than the fact that there is absolutely no central record of parish activities or even of their precise numbers at any one time. There's not a single practical function at present carried out by a parish council that couldn't be taken on by some other body - and often has to be" (Morton, op. cit., p. 173). The lack of attention given to parish councils at the time of reorganization means that such statements still hold true today. Nevertheless, Morton estimated that in 1970 there were approximately 7,000 parish councils in England, and claimed that "By all indices, the parish sector is now about the healthiest part of local government . . . For an area where politics are irrelevant, the fact that a third of all seats are contested (which is more than in the rural districts) is remarkable - especially when one remembers that there are over 57,000 seats to fill. They are filled, moreover, by a broader spectrum of people than any other kind of council " (ibid., p. 174).

The case study material to be presented here focusses on a parish council. Such councils were held to be central to the operation of local democracy until the twentieth century, but now they are dismissed by many as being irrelevant and anachronistic. Certainly their small budget and lack of statutory powers puts the parish councils outside the mainstream of large -scale political decision making, but it remains an open question

as to whether, given such restrictions, these local-level bodies can successfully fulfil the role foreseen for them by Maud and act as mediators between a locality and the hierarchy of local government bureaucracy and be a means of reviving the public interest and participation essential to the democratic process.

In this chapter I have looked at the role of participation in democratic theory and practice. The participation of all citizens in decision making was held by classical theorists to be the foundation of democracy and the English local government structure of elected representation particularly reflects the philosophy of J. S. Mill. Recently, however, the representative system has been declining in effectiveness and there have been demands for more direct public participation. There are many arguments both for and against increased participation, but in the sphere of planning, at least, it has highlighted the drawbacks and met with little success.

Because public participation is controlled by the authorities it has not markedly increased the democratic aspects of decision making. Pessimistically one might conclude that public participation operates more as a means of control than, as Skeffington and others foresaw, of increasing the understanding between planners and public. Whether or not this was the initial strategy, public consultation procedures in fact operate more to reduce the impact of local protests than to stimulate communication. As Murphy observes,

"Through the involvement and co-optation of the citizenry in a process that they are controlled by far more than they control, the citizen is given less a sense of power over than of responsibility for the actions of government "

(Murphy, op. cit., p. 153).

Thus, responsibility may have shifted, but power remains outside the immediate locality. This interpretation was indicated at the time of reorganization by the lack of attention paid to the third tier of councils advocated by Maud and the virtual dismissal of parish councils as significant bodies.

In summary, then, English local government now comprises a combination of representative and participatory procedures, both of which have well-documented problems inherent in their systems. It is against this background of failure and change that I investigate political activity and the use of power in one locality.

CHAPTER II

POLITICS, POWER AND BROKERAGE - THREE

CENTRAL ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS

The main body of this chapter sets out in detail the three analytical concepts by means of which the empirical data have been organized for analysis. For the first two of these concepts - 'politics' and 'power' - I merely state the definitions I have adopted and suggest both how they fit together and why they are suitable for use in an anthropological analysis. The examination of 'brokerage' is considerably more detailed, since its theoretical origins, its differentiation from other related terms and the use made of it in anthropological analyses are all important to the understanding of brokerage as a theoretical concept in the present study.

As a preliminary to the discussion of the three central analytical concepts, I first examine the perspective which social anthropology gives to the investigation of local politics.

1. The anthropological perspective

The previous chapter looked at the literary material - both theoretical and empirical - on the present local government structure. In moving to the analytical level and to the presentation of my own data, it is necessary to give an account of the role of anthropology in the investigation of local political activity and of how an anthropological approach may contribute to our understanding of local politics.

The local-level studies which have been undertaken by anthropologists in Britain have tended to be broad in focus, with little data on political

activity. This is in contrast to anthropological studies done elsewhere - notably in India, Africa and the Mediterranean - where we are given great detail about leadership, decision-making procedures, factions and electioneering (e.g. Bailey, 1965; Smith, 1960; Boissevain, 1974). It is also in marked contrast to studies of local areas in the United States, where great emphasis has been given to 'community power' and the organization of local political groups (e.g. Hunter, 1953; Dahl, 1961; Polsby, 1963). In British studies, therefore, we have on the one hand anthropological analyses of whole communities, which refer to internal political processes as one aspect of social organization among many, whilst on the other hand, studies of local government, councils and political party activity have remained the preserve of political scientists and sociologists. Despite the fact that anthropologists studying other societies have looked at political activity in terms of the interaction of local and external processes, this has seldom been attempted for British communities.

One reason for this apparent reluctance of anthropologists to embark on the detailed study of local politics in Britain may be found in the historical development of the discipline. The early studies of tribal societies undertaken by British anthropologists gave particular emphasis to the fact that in such societies the various organizational institutions, such as kinship, economics, religion and politics, were all closely interdependent and could not be divided into distinct activity spheres. This was presented as a contrast to our own society, where different roles and relationships are supposedly kept separate. But although political activity at the local level in Britain may not consist of such exotic phenomena as blood feuds or witchcraft accusations, and political power may not be so clearly related to age or ritual status, it is nevertheless part of the overall pattern of social organization and therefore open to anthropological analysis here as much as in Africa or India. Whatever the reasons for the

gaps in our knowledge of our own society, we must surely begin, however belatedly, to fill them.

Traditionally, anthropologists had what amounted to an exclusive field of investigation in tribal and technologically underdeveloped societies. The spread of urbanization and industrialization in such areas was associated with the gradual acceptance of the idea that anthropologists have a role to play in the study of their own as well as other cultures. This required a degree of rethinking of the definition of the subject matter of the discipline. "Closed Systems and Open Minds", edited by Devons and Gluckman (1964), has been an important contribution to the placing of social anthropology in relation to other disciplines in the study of those societies where formerly it played no part. In this book, Epstein is concerned to define his field within a specifically urban context:

"For certain purposes it may be convenient to regard a town as having its own internal structure; but in other contexts it is essential to bear in mind that a town represents the point of intersection of a number of different activity systems. In these circumstances, therefore, the anthropologist has to become increasingly aware of the possible importance of external factors "

(Epstein, 1964, pp. 101 - 2).

Thus, referring to a Copperbelt town, Epstein writes that "Many of the events taking place in Luanshya can only be satisfactorily understood if they are seen as forming a complex system of relationships whose boundaries stretch far beyond the town" (ibid., p. 98). Hence, to achieve a full understanding of the local situation we would need to analyse the aims and policies of the mining companies, the question of foreign investment and African-European relationships in national and international terms. In dealing with such topics, Epstein feels, we are reaching the limits of

our technical competence and exposing ourselves to charges of naivety. He therefore suggests that we restrict our analyses to the local-level effects of these external institutions.

In the same volume Bailey argues that political scientists and economists, for example, work at a higher level of abstraction from actual behaviour than do anthropologists. Thus, while the former are interested only in the relationships of power or the exchange of goods and services, which he calls 'single-stranded' relationships, anthropologists are essentially concerned with 'multiplex' ties, that is, those which carry more than one interest, and with the way the different relationships - economic, political and ritual - are linked to one another, Bailey therefore claims that

"Social anthropology has its own subject matter and its own techniques . . . the subject matter need not be solely primitive societies, and the techniques are still useful when the social anthropologist enters into the study of complex societies. By doing so he does not become an amateur historian, or a naive political scientist, or a watered-down economist. On the contrary, he brings to the study of complex societies forms of understanding which are complementary to, but quite distinct from, those of the disciplines named "

(Bailey, 1964, p. 52).

Therefore, while recognising that the social systems of all societies must now be accepted as complex and subject to the constraints and resources of external systems, there is still a clearly-defined role for the social anthropologist in the study of interpersonal relations in the context of these multiplex influences on behaviour at the local level.

The specific problem on which this analysis focusses is one which I believe is ideally suited to an anthropological approach. The problem concerns an encapsulated system and the articulation of different structural levels. The anthropological perspective can demonstrate how this is achieved

through interpersonal relations. The analysis will involve consideration of cultural factors, structures, processes, groups and individuals, the inter-relationships of which are the raison d'etre of social anthropology.

2. Politics

In seeking a working definition of politics the range of processes I wish to incorporate in the study must be borne in mind. Hence, the definition must be a great deal more flexible than many which might be acceptable for use by political scientists or other students of large-scale institutions. It must allow for the existence of some governmental institutions and administrative machinery, but also incorporate the informal dimension. Multiplexity and the inter-relations of various aspects of social life are a central concern of anthropology and the importance of the 'non-political' in the exercise of power must be recognised. In reassessing Weber's four basic characteristics of bureaucratic organization - specialization, a hierarchy of authority, a system of rules and impersonality - Blau and Meyer say that

" . . . even if such clear-cut divisions between formal and informal spheres were always to exist, which is questionable, it would still be relevant to enquire whether informal relations and unofficial practices have any significant effect on operations and the achievement of organizational objectives "

(Blau and Meyer, 1971, p. 37).

But rather than retaining a narrow definition and then inquiring into the relevance of factors not included, as Blau and Meyer imply, I wish, by contrast, to define politics in such a way that 'informal relations and unofficial practices' are taken from the first to have political effects: to relegate them to the status of intrusions or accidentals parallels the

structural-functionalist view of conflict as being anomalous or temporary.

Many anthropologists have sought to solve the problem of arriving at a suitable definition by employing extremely broad criteria. M. G. Smith is one of several authors who stress the "public" nature of political affairs: "A political organization is (thus) the organization which regulates these public affairs" (Smith, 1974, p. 82). In my opinion, this is too all-inclusive to be useful. Furthermore, Smith's apparently simple definition depends on a detailed analysis of what is meant by a "public", which he says, must be defined empirically. In essence, however, his publics are corporate groups which can exist at any level, but which have "clear identities, boundaries and membership; an exclusive body of interests and affairs; and the autonomy, organization and procedures necessary to manage these" (*ibid.*, p. 82). Political activity is, therefore, seen as the behaviour related to the creation, maintenance and organization of such groups and to study a political system is to discover the nature of such groups and analyse their self-management and interactions. Smith's emphasis on groups, and particularly on their corporate nature, seems to me to re-introduce a certain rigidity into his argument, which the simplicity of the initial definition belied.

Swartz, Turner and Tuden also give emphasis to the "public" factor in formulating their definition of politics:

"The study of politics, then, is the study of the processes involved in determining and implementing public goals and in the differential achievement and use of power by the members of the group concerned with those goals"

(Swartz, Turner and Tuden, 1966, p. 7).

This is the outcome of a long discussion of the concepts incorporated in the definition. Political goals must be public, they must concern scarce resources for which there is competition; the group may be any segment of

society which recognises the goals and power is the capacity to secure compliance with goal-oriented decisions. This definition is more useful than Smith's because there is less emphasis on structural considerations and because it limits the public affairs which are considered political to those which involve the use of public power. It seems, however, to go to the other and equally undesirable extreme in its emphasis on process to the exclusion of structure. Also, as with their notion of 'phase development' (ibid., p. 37), these authors place too much stress on conflict and struggle at the expense of co-operation and unity, which must also have a place in political activity. Swartz's later formulation of the subject matter is somewhat broader:

"Whenever there are activities related to the formulation and implementation of public goals and/or events having to do with the distribution and/or use of public power, these activities and events will be considered political whether or not they occur within or have any relevance to any sort of governmental structure"

(Swartz, 1968, p.2).

This definition is less oriented towards conflict and therefore more generally applicable.

Numerous other definitions of politics have been employed, all having some advantages and disadvantages. Throughout the anthropological literature, however, there is in my view no more acceptable and meaningful definition than that formulated by David Easton, a political scientist. Easton, does, in fact, acknowledge a debt to M. G. Smith as being one of the earliest writers to produce a mode of analysis applicable to both primitive and modern societies (Smith's refinement of the Weberian distinction between politics and administration/power and authority, as used in "Government in Zazzau", 1960). Easton believes that a continuum is more useful in the comparative context than classifications and dichotomies, but it is

only his definition which need concern us here. He advocates that

"Political activity will be viewed as an aspect of social action in general. An act will be political when it is more or less related to the formulation and execution of binding or authoritative decisions for a social system. A decision is an act which allocates valued things among two or more persons or groups, either by granting something or denying something. A decision is authoritative when the persons it affects consider themselves bound by it"

(Easton, 1959, p.226, my emphasis).

Although Swartz, Turner and Tuden make clear reference to the earlier work of Easton, I do not think they improve on his definition. Apart from its neatness and self-containment, this definition is valuable for other reasons. Firstly, it does, as Easton explicitly intended, apply to activity in all types of society and, furthermore, to any level of social grouping. Secondly, the importance of the informal, unofficial activity referred to above is allowed for by the use of the phrase 'more or less directly related'. Thirdly, the 'formulation and execution' allows us to include both policy-formation and administration. Finally, the allocation of values 'by granting something or denying something' is an implicit but useful definition of power.

Easton's formulation is particularly valuable in the context of local political activity in modern society because his definition includes not only decision making, but also activity related to this. As early as 1959 Birch stated that "Communities which in the past were mainly dependent on their own efforts for their prosperity, welfare and government now find themselves at the mercy of external authorities" (Birch, 1959, p.2). The externalization of administrative authority is even more pronounced today and local politics is therefore mainly concerned with trying to influence decisions which are made elsewhere. According to Easton's definition,

attempting to influence decision making may be interpreted as political activity just as much as decision making itself.

Easton advocates that all systems where binding decisions are made can be seen as 'political units'; but he distinguishes these from the 'political community', which he suggests be used to refer to "the most inclusive aggregate of people who identify with each other as a group and who are prepared to regulate their differences by means of decisions accepted as binding" (*ibid.*, p.229). He abstracts a series of five categories under which political activity can be subsumed: the formulation of demands, legislation, administration, adjudication and the marshalling of support or solidarity. The latter is a particularly important variable in placing societies on Easton's proposed continuum of political systems, which is based on the degree of structural separation of political and other social roles. I shall not pursue the notion of a continuum in the present context, but I shall refer to other concepts introduced by Easton at later stages.

Easton's political analysis is usually categorised as 'structuralist' (e.g. Swartz, Turner and Tuden, *op. cit.*, p.29). I believe, however, that his definition of politics is so broad and at the same time so exact that it does not preclude the use of either a structuralist or an actor-oriented perspective. Furthermore, it is specifically designed to incorporate decision making at different levels of the social system. I shall therefore adopt Easton's definition of politics in the ensuing analysis.

3. Power

Easton's implicit definition of power as the allocation of values by granting or denying something is useful, but the central importance of

power to a study of political activity necessitates some further discussion of the meaning I attribute to the concept.

In remarking on the lack of emphasis on power in studies of British communities, Bell and Newby relate this omission to the size of units investigated. Most of the communities studied have been very small, they say, "and cannot realistically have been said to contain within them much power over their futures in comparison with 'higher' authorities" (Bell and Newby, 1971, p.220). I do not accept that it is valid to justify the failure to study local-level power relations simply on the basis that such activities are less developed here than at higher levels. Wherever power exists it is open to investigation and if comparisons as to variable amounts of power are to be made, these should be among units of similar structural status and not between the microcosm and its encapsulating structure.

Whether or not one finds and investigates power in a local social system depends of course on how one defines the phenomenon. As with politics, the only definition useful to a social anthropologist is one which allows for the existence of power at different levels of the social structure and with variable manifestations. It is not productive to limit the concept of power, as Bell and Newby apparently do, to a form of legalistic authority. In this context I will adopt the minimal definition suggested by Richard Adams, who sees power as referring to

"... the ability of a person or social unit to influence the conduct and decision-making of another through the control over energetic forms in the latter's environment (in the broadest sense of that term)" (Adams, 1977, p.388).

I do not find Adams' discussion of "energy" particularly helpful in the present context but the notion that power is the ability to control

another's environment seems to be extremely useful, particularly in terms of the breadth of its applicability. Elsewhere, Adams has focussed on the simplest level of power relations:

"The minimum amount of control and consequent power available to any collectivity is that which separately pertains to each individual member in accord with his particular capabilities, strengths, skills and knowledge. . ."

(Adams, 1975, p.56).

By this definition, power can be found and studied at any level of social interaction, from the individual to the inter-continental. Adams, however, is not unaware of the importance of relativity in power relations and the influence of the superordinate power on local manifestations:

"The structure of power in any particular microcosm can be related to the structure of power of a macrocosm that envelops it; and the macrocosmic structures increasingly determine what can take place in the microcosm" (ibid., p.87).

This fits exactly with the approach I outlined earlier of looking at external controls not as intrusions into a local system, but as part of the environment within which the local system operates. Adams suggests that the amount of power in a society expands as the environment becomes more complex, that is, as the phenomena which can be controlled increase in number. Thus, in the case of a small town greater amounts of power are exercised outside the immediate area and these impinge on the town itself. Power is available in any locality, but at the more local level it operates chiefly in relation to the enveloping, or encapsulating, structure.

I will make use of several of the refinements of Adams' analysis at a later stage. Here suffice it to state that, although there are several types of power which can be exercised in numerous ways, power by Adams' definition is a recognisable aspect of social relations which can be abstracted for analysis:

"Given these varieties of power, it should now be clear that when we speak of an individual's power, we are speaking of the totality of influence deriving from the totality of controls that he exercises directly or indirectly . . . As with all things cultural, power cannot exist alone as an energetically manifested ability, but must also be recognised by others and by the individual possessing it . . . Power thus stands as a component of social relations and requires reciprocal recognition and appropriate behaviours"

(Adams, 1977, pp. 388-9).

Easton's concept of politics and Adams' concept of power are mutually compatible.¹ To combine the two we may say that political power is the ability to make or influence binding decisions which affect the environment of the members of the political community. The political community is the group which is bound by the decisions and each member of it has some degree of political power in terms of his ability to influence. In an encapsulated structure political power will be constrained by external factors, but whether the exercise of power is expressed through formal or informal channels is irrelevant to the definition. This approach to notions of power and politics can be seen to reflect what was said about the anthropological perspective in that it incorporates both the internal/external dimension and the multiplexity of social relations within a single theoretical framework.

4. Brokerage

The third major analytical concept which has a central place in this study is 'brokerage'. My attention was first drawn to the possible usefulness of the concept of brokerage to the present analysis by the incidence of its use in association with social network analysis. On re-reading some

1. In a footnote to his detailed exposition of his theory of power, Adams notes with some apparent discomfort the relationship between some of his ideas and those of Easton (Adams, 1975, p. 30).

of the literature which gave rise to the interest in brokerage, however, I became aware that this could become a major organizational concept in the thesis. As it has been used in anthropological analysis in a political context, brokerage is closely related to power in that it is a means by which an individual controls the environment of others by exploiting the advantages of his own structural situation. Brokerage has now become the central analytical focus of this thesis and it will be posited as the actual point of articulation between different groups and levels of political activity and as the means by which personal political power is accumulated in an encapsulated structure. Because of its importance I now examine the concept in considerable detail, looking at both its development and its use.

Much of the work on brokerage stems in a fairly direct way from the influence of Frederik Barth; and I feel that Barth's own ideas in this area derive from two clear sources, one theoretical and the other situational. In his analysis of individual choices and alliance-formation among the Swat Pathans ("Segmentary Opposition and the Theory of Games", 1959) Barth makes explicit use of Neumann and Morgenstern's exposition of Game Theory ("Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour", 1947), and particularly of the zero-sum model of economic behaviour, which he transposes into a political context. This theory is based on the notion that choices are made between alternative courses of action in the knowledge of the relative advantages of each; the gains and losses, either immediate or potential, are assessed and the behaviour of rational man can be analysed in terms of his decisions in situations of choice. By use of the zero-sum model in his political analysis, Barth takes the support available within the society to be finite; the gains of one leader will therefore be the losses

of others. The rules of the game are known to all, the prizes are universally valued and strategies are devised to maximise gains and minimise losses.

When he turned his attention to processes of social change in Northern Norway, Barth retained the conceptual framework of Weberian economic rationality and transactional analysis but the socio-economic structure of the area led to an important refinement in the decision-making model of political man. Although there is considerable variation in particular local situations Northern Norway can be described as a single ecological area. Basically it was then a region of sparse coastal settlements and dual economies, based on the fluctuating resources of the sea and the severely limited agricultural land. Fish was the cash product and farming was based on the family unit for both labour and consumption. Communications were extremely poor and amenities were few; it was a peripheral area in both social and economic terms and there was a marked dependence on the external society. In this region there was a tendency for power to be concentrated, particularly in the hands of fish-buyers, who in the past had been able to control not only the sales of fish, but the retail trade, harbour facilities, and hence communications. Such a situation aggravated the dependency relationship by making communities unable to deal directly with outside agencies or retain any degree of economic autonomy. It was in the context of this socio-economic environment that

Barth formulated his concept of the 'entrepreneur' as a particular sort of decision maker - one who makes profits by exploiting the isolation of the local community and his own access to external resources:

"Entrepreneurial activity may be understood as a response and adaptation to this unequal economic relationship with the outside; and the very close association of entrepren-

eurship with every form of leadership in the community is perhaps an artifact of it"

(Barth, 1963, p.15)

The existence of the Lappish minority in Northern Norway created further opportunities for specialised profit-making and so contributed to the development of entrepreneurial activity.

Barth's entrepreneur is still very much a rational man, operating within set rules to devise strategies which will bring him profits. Like any political leader, he manipulates others by promises or threats and mobilises support for his own ends. But an entrepreneur cannot be said to be operating within the framework of a zero-sum model; for enterprise is above all creative. The entrepreneur is an initiator, an innovator, who sees possibilities which were previously unexploited; he undertakes experimental and speculative actions based on his assessment of the risks involved. In terms of the situation of North Norway, the dependency of local people on outside agencies - through either economic or ethnic inferiority - gave great scope for enterprise, that is, for exploiting the dependency situation for profit.

The approach Barth advocates for the study of entrepreneurial activity is reminiscent of the analytical framework outlined above (see p.5), in that it moves from the structural to the processual. The entrepreneur is not an established role which can be analysed by reference to the institutional structure; it is a behavioural sequence occurring through time. The entrepreneur, however, does operate within certain restrictions which limit his freedom of choice and these must be examined before the reasons for and implications of his choices can be explained in rational terms. The

restrictions derive from the entrepreneur's 'niche' and his 'assets'. The niche comprises the entrepreneur's position in relation to both the material resources of the society and to other people as potential clients and competitors. The assets are his capital, comprising skills, experience and social claims. Thus Barth suggests that

"It is through the formulation of restrictions that the preceding structural features of the situation are made relevant to the understanding of choice and strategy: they determine the mould into which an enterprise must fit. An entrepreneur's choice of enterprise is clearly a highly strategic choice, through which his chances of profit are significantly determined; a successful choice relates niche and assets to each other in an optimal way "

(ibid., p. 10).

The profits of the enterprise will vary in both form and liquidity according to the niche being exploited and the techniques used. Thus, profits such as social status may be accumulated indefinitely, whereas profits in the form of political office may only be accumulated up to a certain point (although this is an economic model, there is no implication that profit will be monetary). Similarly, some profits can be transferred to other enterprises, whilst others are not convertible and yet others may not be stored at all.

Since it is based on transactional analysis, this view of entrepreneurial activity posits reciprocity between the entrepreneur and his social environment. Both the entrepreneur and the rest of the community are making choices and both sides assess the relative gains and losses of each transaction. Entrepreneurship must therefore be seen as a career, a process through time. The niche and assets of the institutional organization and personal abilities form a framework of restrictions within which the enterprise takes place; these are not constant, however, but change with

each decision made both by the entrepreneur and by those with whom he interacts. The model is therefore dynamic and requires that the social situation be constantly reassessed and the implications of previous actions taken into account. Such emphasis on the need for a cumulative view of social action is a recurring theme in anthropology and echoes Mitchell's 'extended-case method' (1956), later manifested both in Swartz, Turner and Tuden's 'political phase development' (1966) and in Turner's 'social drama' (1957). Barth's approach is perhaps more extreme, in that he presents the actors as being explicitly aware of the developmental dimension in making their strategic choices.

The concept of 'social enterprise' avoids the over-emphasis on conflict posited by most actor-oriented models of political activity. In the present context it is crucial because it is from the notion of the entrepreneur that an understanding of the implications of brokerage has developed.

Barth relates the emergence of brokers to a further situational feature of Northern Norway. Because the region has come to be seen as economically dependent and marginal there have been various institutional attempts to remedy this. These have consisted of centrally controlled welfare schemes, subsidies and benefits, the availability of which has both increased the peripheral population's awareness of the inferiority of their way of life and required them to use bureaucratic channels to avail themselves of the improvements offered by the state. Thus, many entrepreneurs have selected as their niche the interstitial position of mediation between the local population and outside agencies:

"This is the niche where he can find most clients: persons who need and desire goods, services and leadership, who are unable by traditional means and skills available to them to obtain what they wish. It is also the niche where he can most readily raise the capital needed for enterprises: the loans, subsidies and technical assistance which the Welfare State offers to ameliorate and remedy conditions in the area"

(ibid., p. 16).

The inability of the local population to deal with the bureaucracy on which it depends is particularly marked among the Lappish community, and the mediation by someone with the ability to deal with outside agencies has created a particular kind of entrepreneurship. Barth concludes that

"These three logically independent sets of factors: economic dependence, ethnic distinctiveness, and peripheral location tend to combine to produce a situation in Northern Norway where entrepreneurial opportunities are predominantly to be found in mediating roles, where new links are being created between local communities and central or national organizations - i.e. the entrepreneur becomes a broker"

(ibid., p. 16).

The papers in the volume ("The Role of the Entrepreneur in Social Change in Northern Norway") clearly emphasise the importance of this situation of dependency for the activities of the entrepreneur. Eidheim, in particular, focusses on a local leader who exploits the communication gap between a small community and national bureaucracy, and states that

"To obtain a fair share of social goods and progress, the inhabitants feel that it is necessary to fill the key positions in local government with people who are well acquainted with the forms of interactions in the larger society, and who understand the techniques of administration.

While in principle all citizens and districts have equal rights, certain contributions from the larger society come to the local community only after a definite and well-founded initiative on their part, and this must have a certain form and go through certain channels to be effective"

(Eidheim, 1963, p.72).

By examining the career of one entrepreneur - a Norwegian in a predominately Lappish settlement - Eidheim contributes many refinements to Barth's conceptual framework. He highlights the contractual element of enterprise by showing that the innovatory aspect in this case means seeking out both clients and issues; also, that the clients themselves can be seen as profit if their allegiance brings in more clients. The profit which is this entrepreneur's goal is public recognition of his expertise, which is convertible into both political office and the power to innovate further. The emergence of a competitor put pressure on the entrepreneur to take up new issues, but he did this only where he calculated there would be support for himself. Thus, the enterprise is seen to generate its own dynamic force, since the profits of one phase can only be maintained by further activity.

Eidheim's analysis is extremely penetrating, yet he must be criticised for his failure to observe Barth's distinction between entrepreneurship and brokerage. For example, the entrepreneur under study is the local representative of a national political party and he uses this position to manipulate his followers. Thus, Eidheim says, he emphasises the needs of the local area and "must continuously postulate . . . that he as representative of the party can obtain the goods which satisfy these needs" (ibid., p. 73). Later we are told that

"B's (the entrepreneur's) party, the most powerful in the country, with a majority in parliament is pictured as the creator of all prosperity and the most important instru-

ment for procuring the goods and maintaining the prosperity of which A (the competitor) will cheat the Lapps. Among the peripheral clients one finds these arguments simplified to: "We must vote for B or we will lose the old age pension"

(ibid., p.76)

Although most of the activity described in the paper is entrepreneurship, being based on the creation of issues where profits can be made, I would prefer to see incidents such as these as brokerage, for the entrepreneur is acting as a mediator between two distinct bodies and manipulating the information deriving from his intermediary position for the accumulation of profit, in this case recognition of expertise.

It is clearly important to distinguish brokerage from other types of entrepreneurial careers in this way. Another source of refinement, indicated by Eidheim's use of the term "clients", is the distinction between brokerage and patronage, which has been most extensively explored by Robert Paine in his theoretical framework presented in "Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic" (1971). Here he suggests that definitions of patronage based on roles and relative rank are inadequate and that we must look rather at the processes of exchange involved in particular relationships:

"The first step is taken, I think, when we regard the actors in a patron-client relationship as coming to it with various assets and restrictions, and when we regard the actors as different, rather than unequal, in what they possess"

(Paine, 1971, p.11).

The resources must be converted into influence before control can be achieved. A patron, according to Paine, has a fund of assets which he uses to promote the client's dependence on him; it is the patron who

decides what values will be exchanged in the relationship. Since the broker too has certain assets which he manipulates for personal gain whilst appearing to be a benefactor to those he deals with, Paine believes that the terms have come to be used loosely as interchangeable. The distinction he offers is based on the source of the values exchanged in the relationship and on the process of exchange itself:

"The patron chooses the values, or prestations, that are put into circulation by him . . . The concept of broker, on the other hand, essentially has to do with 'processing' of information (whether or not with the intent of mediation), and I reserve the use of broker to one who, while purveying values that are not his own, is also purposively making changes of emphasis and/or content"

(ibid., pp. 20-21).

Thus, the patron's position is based on the use he makes of his own assets, whilst that of the broker depends on his manipulation of others' assets to which he has access.¹

Paine then goes on to look at the inter-relation of patronage and brokerage activity and the likelihood of movement from one to another. In this context, however, he states that:

"The activity of a broker does not imply that he necessarily has influence over either of the groups between which he interacts in this role, such as a patron possesses"

(ibid., p. 21).

Here Paine too is guilty of loose expression. It is true that established influence is not part of the broker's structural position, but if we are looking at a process, rather than a role, as he maintains, then we must accept that the achievement of influence is the chief motiva-

1. According to Paine, brokers deal only in information; I do not think this strict limitation is necessary and prefer to retain a wider view of possible brokerage assets, such as material goods and votes.

tion of the broker and that if he fails to attain influence his profits will be lost. Paine includes the word "purposively" in his definition of the broker's use of information, so attempted influence must surely be accepted as a central feature of brokerage activity. I agree with Paine that the broker does not necessarily, as does the patron, use his influence to establish a personal following, but if influence is removed from the situation then the manipulation of information is without reason and we are left with mediation or 'bridging' alone. It is in this sense that brokerage is intimately bound up with the exercise of political power.

To some extent the confusion at this point in Paine's analysis results from his concern to distinguish patronage and brokerage, which is certainly an important task. I believe, however, that the source of values suggested initially is a sufficient distinguishing criterion and that the exercise of influence must be retained in the definition of each type of behaviour. Thus, we may say that the patron gains influence by establishing his own assets as values and then dispensing these in return for other assets; the broker, on the other hand, plays off the values of one group against those of another and gains influence and other profits by manipulating the values during mediation. On this basis I can then agree completely with Paine that the two positions may be embraced alternately or in combination by the same person and that one is not necessarily a developmental stage of the other.

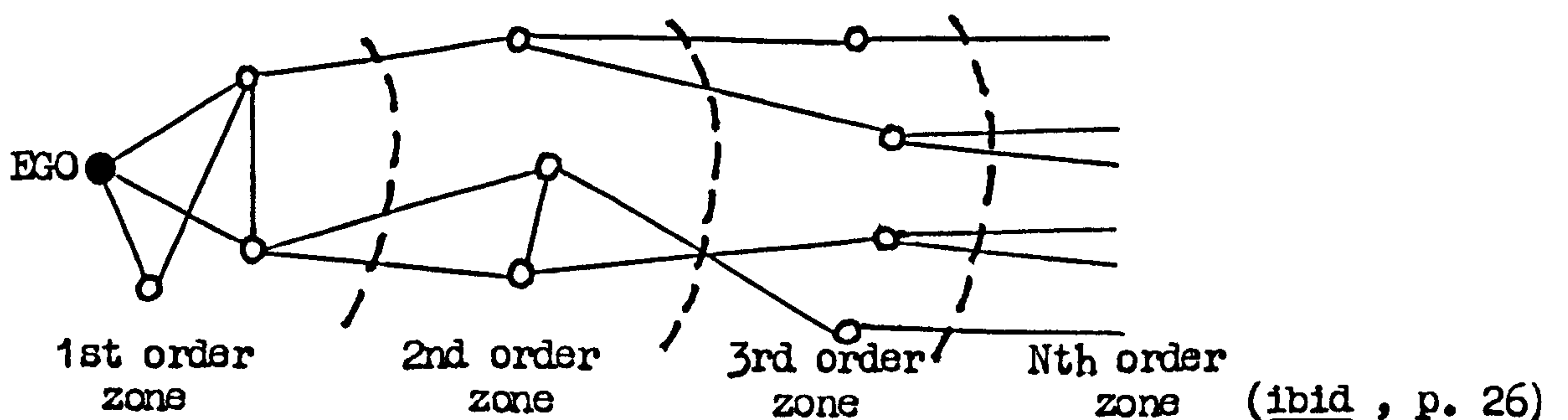
Another writer who has contributed to the formulation of the brokerage concept is Jeremy Boissevain. He is also concerned to rectify the loose use made of the terms 'patron' and 'broker' in previous studies, among which he includes his own early work. In 1969, and in greater detail in

1974, Boissevain bases his definition of brokerage largely on the concepts of network analysis used in combination with a Barthian transactional approach: a social network being conceptualised as a set of linkages by which goods, services and information are exchanged. Boissevain uses Barth's definition of enterprise as involving innovation and risk for the pursuit of profit in a specifically network context, for it is interpersonal relations which must be created and exploited. He holds the view that

"Every individual provides a point at which networks intersect. But not everyone displays the same interest in and talent for cultivating relationships with strategic persons and manipulating these for profit"

(Boissevain, 1974, p. 146).

(The introduction of 'interest' and 'talent' as variables in the broker's profit-making ability is an addition which will be seen to be very important later in looking at the Bridgeham Parish Councillors). Boissevain then suggests that patronage and brokerage be distinguished according to the type of resources being manipulated by the operator (a distinction he derives from the work of A. Mayer, 1967). These are of two types: the resources the entrepreneur controls directly, such as material goods or the dispensation of titles, and those which are available to him through his strategic contacts with other people who control them. These are the first and second order resources, the latter being reminiscent of Barth's "social claims". These orders of resources can be seen to be linked to Boissevain's conceptualization of networks as comprising zones:



Those who gain advantages by their control of first order resources are termed patrons, whilst those who manipulate relationships to control second order resources are brokers:

"A broker is thus a special type of entrepreneur: one who controls second order resources and manipulates them for his own profit. Brokers are thus highly expert network specialists" (ibid., p. 148).

In refining his ideas, Boissevain draws on communication theory - "A broker is a professional manipulator of people and information who brings about communication for profit" (ibid., p. 148). He believes that the important questions to ask about brokerage concern the amount of information, the capacity of the channel, the coding process and the effect of interference. To the notions of communication theory, however, the anthropologist must add the tariff which is charged for transmission; the tariff may consist of goods, services, information, prestige, satisfaction, etc. Thus,

"Brokerage is a business. A broker's capital consists of his personal network of relations with people; in brief his communication channels . . . Interaction must thus be seen as a strategic game with each party trying to gain value or at least break even. This value I call tariff. Whether a person makes a profit very much depends on the tariff charged by the other parties in the transaction, as well as other social costs, and ultimately, on the interest he is able to exact. The tariff is rarely specified and normally paid later . . . It is in the interests of both parties to keep the channel open, either by underpaying or overpaying at a later date. The strategy is to avoid specifying the tariff"

(Boissevain, 1969, p. 383).

Since the transactions are not usually simultaneous exchanges, then, the broker operates above all on credit. Like Barth, Boissevain emphasises that brokerage is a career in which credit is built up cumulatively; but his stress on networks leads Boissevain to view the career as a process

in which the broker increases his range of strategic contacts. In the early stages a broker is likely to depend on other brokers for second order resources to which he has no access, the ultimate aim is to have access to all the resources necessary to the enterprise through his own network, and it is the process of strategically extending the network which must be observed.

Boissevain pays some attention to the network qualities which tend to produce successful brokerage. Apart from willingness to create and manipulate certain sorts of network ties, Boissevain states that "Where a person has a large network with a high score for multiplexity and exchange content he can operate as a broker" (*ibid.*, p. 153). This is in complete contrast to the data from peripheral areas, where it was repeatedly those of marginal status, with few strong personal ties in the locality, who emerged as brokers: the Norwegian in the Lappish community and the white missionary among the Indians. This divergence of opinion may be due simply to the contrasting situations in which brokers have been observed. In mediating for an ethnic minority or an economically dependent group some degree of identity with the outside culture and marginal local status may be an advantage, whereas the broker manipulating power relations within a single Maltese community (which is what Boissevain observed) may benefit from being centrally placed in the local social network. Boissevain does state, however, that the value of the broker's second order resources lies partly in their being an unknown quantity to the other actors:

"Because one is never quite sure of the extent of a broker's capital (who and how good his contacts are), it is easier for him to increase his credit than for someone whose capital consists exclusively of first order resources. These latter are more easily observed and, moreover, are finite, whereas the network of a broker is open-ended, thus potentially infinite" (*ibid.*, p. 160).

This would suggest that although multiplexity in the network may increase the broker's ability to manipulate relationships, if the density is too great the resources would be too well-known, and therefore predictable, for strategic use in political competition, for as Boissevain says, "The broker 'deals' in speculation and hope . . . in promises to consult others" (ibid., p. 161).

From this I would conclude that both types of network position - marginality and centrality - may have advantages to the broker. Centrality could be an asset in establishing credibility, in convincing people that promises can be fulfilled. On the other hand, marginality might be a useful means of ensuring that the broker is the only person controlling the information and also of avoiding the need to share out eventual profits. The relative importance of the situation can only be assessed for each case empirically.

There is some disagreement among the various authors both about the detailed definition of brokerage and on the social contexts in which it operates. However, since the importance of a concept lies in the contribution it makes to understanding through analytical application, I will now examine the use made of brokerage in two recent studies of local political activity. One of the finest examples of the explanatory powers of the notion of brokerage when used as a tool of analysis is undoubtedly Anton Blok's work on the mafia. Blok is concerned to explain the persistence of the mafia in a Sicilian village and to provide an overall framework in which to view their operations, which have been variously described as those of a marginal criminal association, a corporate structure in opposition to

the state or merely as the fictitious invention of outsiders. The analysis is diachronic, covering the period from 1860 to 1960, and makes use of historical records, local tales and observable situations. Once again, the environment of the broker is the periphery of the state, an area of rural isolation.

The central organizational concept utilised by Blok is that of power brokerage, his understanding of which he attributes largely to the early work on the subject by Eric Wolf, whose ideas were developed specifically in the context of the need to understand the inter-relationship of local and national structures. Wolf suggests that power brokers "Stand guard over the crucial junctures of synapses of relationships which connect the local system to the larger whole" (Wolf, 1956, p. 1075). They mediate between 'community-oriented' individuals, who lack economic security and political power, and 'nation-oriented' individuals who operate in large-scale institutions yet depend on the support of a personal following. This is very similar to the notions of brokerage outlined above. The aspect of Wolf's conceptualization which is the key to Blok's analysis is that in order to maintain his own power position the broker must not only exploit the communication gaps between the mutually dependent parties, but at the same time must preserve the isolation of the two spheres; brokers must therefore

"... serve some of the interests of groups operating on both the community and the national level, and they must cope with the conflicts raised by the collision of these interests. They cannot settle them, since by doing so they would abolish their own usefulness to others. They thus often act as buffers between groups, maintaining the tensions which provide the dynamic of their actions"

(ibid., p. 1076,
my emphasis).

Following this definition, Blok presents the mafia as power brokers of a highly specialised type:

"Mafiosi distinguish themselves from other intermediaries in at least two different respects. First, they exploit the gaps in communication between the peasant village and the larger society rather than closing or destroying them: they thrive upon these interstices and prevent others from making their own connections. Second, mafiosi ensure and buttress their intermediate position through the systematic threat and practice of physical violence"

(Blok, 1974, p.8)

Through an historical analysis Blok is able to show how the retainers of feudal landlords operated as violent middlemen in the eighteenth century in a localised context. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, the development of both the state and external markets offered a new niche for middlemen and this was exploited by the mafia. The use of physical violence by both groups, he says, should not blur the important distinction between the essentially local situation of the feudal henchmen and the local-national mediation opportunities which gave rise to mafia power. It was the development of the Italian state and at the same time its inability to penetrate the periphery which allowed the mafia to monopolise communication channels between the peasantry and national structures:

"When the State is unable to control and integrate peripheral areas, there is room for political middlemen or brokers, who are able to bridge the gaps in communication . . . Though functions for middlemen roles are thus generated by relative isolation or segmentation, the persistence of both these roles and the gaps they bridge is related to the degree to which middlemen succeed in dominating the paths that link the village to the larger, encompassing society"

(ibid., p. 25).

The power of the mafia was established during the nineteenth century with the growth of absentee landlords. Mafiosi took on positions of estate managers, which gave them control over the peasants' livelihoods. They were then able to develop a patron-broker-client situation, whereby the peasants, in return for access to land, gave electoral support to the mafia candidates, who were usually the landlords. The mafioso thus made himself indispensable to both sides, linking the candidate (patron) with the electorate (clients), thereby gaining control over both landlord and peasant. Profits were in the form of support and extorted cash from the peasants and protection from the law by the urban patron; the sanction was violence. Such relations were built up only over time and the network of inter-relations among the mafia was the key to their ability to control all access between the local and national levels and to co-ordinate their exercise of violence. Thus Blok describes the rise of the mafia as a response to the development of centralised power in Italy. The persistence of their power, however, he attributes to their ability to maintain the tensions and communication gaps and so retain their indispensibility as brokers; in Wolf's words they did not 'abolish their own usefulness'. Furthermore, the mafia did not use the brokerage position as a taking -off point to establish themselves as patrons even though they had created the opportunity to do so:

"They controlled the land whose owners lived elsewhere; they dominated the markets and auctions; they alone were able to grant effective protection in the countryside; and they "fixed" elections. Characteristically, however, mafiosi often exercised these functions of brokerage without seeking formal office themselves. . . . Rather than occupying these offices themselves, mafiosi controlled access to or wielded influence over these junctures that tied the village to the encompassing society. Mafiosi helped to shape these

relations and in some cases even determined the operation of these offices. As brokers of a violent type, mafiosi were poised between the peasants (from whose ranks they sprang) and the State, and succeeded in maintaining a grip on the tensions . . . "

(ibid., pp. 178 - 9).

The ability to monopolize external access is a function of the mafioso's network management, and on this point Blok is much clearer than Boissevain as to the network qualities which strengthen the broker's potential power:

"The position of the leader depended upon his range of contacts with persons who were important to him and vice versa: the smaller the number of steps that the leader had to take to reach these persons, the stronger his position. Yet this reachability accounts for only part of the leader's strength. The number of lateral linkages between these lateral contacts, especially links between persons adjacent to the leader, should be controlled and kept to a minimum to ensure his monopoly as a broker: when people learn to make their own contacts, the leader will be out of a job"

(ibid., p. 137).

But given that mafia power derived from their ability to create and maintain suitable network links, to monopolise communication channels and innovate methods of control, Blok is concerned to demonstrate that the persistence of the mafia depended on their opportunism in exploiting the lack of integration between the local and national levels of social organization under conditions of change. Their degree of control over the peasants increased as voting rights were extended, up to the time of universal male franchise after the First World War. There followed a period of peasant unrest, which made landlords even more dependent on mafia control of the local areas. Blok sees this as the time of greatest mafia power. With the advent of Fascism in 1922, however, centralised control was increased, the party system closed the gaps in communication, elections were later abolished and there were massive arrests among the mafia and their supporters. But the Fascists did not destroy the land-holding system which had provided the power base for the mafia as brokers and after the Second World War

the weakness of the new government prevented it from adequately policing the rural areas and mafia violence re-emerged as the chief source of local control. Furthermore, the post-war increases of public services created a new need for mediation, which the mafia at once exploited. Blok also suggests that this renewed strength may have been related to some extent to the relative lack in rural Sicily of alternative communication channels which have emerged elsewhere, and particularly to the failure of left-wing parties to establish an organization of sufficient strength to by-pass mafia control of the area. It was, then, "both the relative isolation of these levels and spheres on the one hand, and the growing impact of State institutions on the other (which) provided ambitious and cunning rural entrepreneurs with specific power chances" (ibid., pp. 213-14). More recently still, however, the decline of peasant farming and massive rural emigration have led to another erosion of mafia power.

Through an analysis of the operations of the mafia as power brokers over a period of time during which the structural changes in the environment were considerable, Blok is able to shed new light on their function and the reasons for the persistence of this apparently inexplicably powerful organization. Following Adams¹, he concludes that

"Like power brokers elsewhere, mafiosi wielded power in two spheres: their actual control in either sphere depended upon their success in dealing with the other. Far from replacing the State or constituting a State within a State as has been so often believed, mafiosi depended on the State since their local and regional power domains existed only by virtue of their access to the larger domains of the state. The concepts

1. Adams' definition of the power broker is that "His control over either sphere depends upon his success in dealing with the other; his controls in one level of articulation provide a basis for his controls in another" (Adams, 1970, pp. 320-1) Adams' concepts of power domains are discussed below (see p.170).

of political middlemen and power broker prove particularly helpful in understanding this symbiosis. The very articulation of mafiosi with public authorities and national politicians rendered any State-based action or reform against them abortive" (ibid., p. 212).

The mafia are therefore presented as pivotal actors between two relatively isolated social spheres. Although making maximum use of social historical factors in both the local and the national context, Blok's analysis, by focussing on power brokerage, is also a sound argument for the role of anthropology in the study of locally-based political activity:

"Given his strong interest and field experience in small-scale communities, the anthropologist has a special licence to study the processes of encapsulation . . . His approach has the advantage of yielding primary data consisting of observable actions of political middlemen as they deal with community-oriented and nation-oriented individuals. The anthropologist's contribution should therefore be wholly complementary to that of the other social sciences which, from different points of view, focus on the same subject"

(ibid., p.8).

Another anthropologist who has taken this local-level view of the effects of State organization on local politics is Mart Bax, who makes particular use of Boissevain's network and resources concept of brokerage in his analysis of political activity in rural Ireland. This is a fascinating study of members of parliament (TD's) and County Councillors and their relationship with the power base of their rural electorate. Only 30 years ago, according to Bax, the local government system was extremely corrupt and the influence of personal relations, particularly nepotism, at county council level was well known. Despite legal reforms, however, the manipulation of rules and resources for political profit is still widespread and Bax describes the rural politicians as brokers mediating between the local population and external authorities in return for electoral support.

The title of Bax's book is "Harpstrings and Confession". 'Pulling strings' is apparently a common phrase for asking a politician for help or favours, and 'hearing confession' is applied to the politician who makes regular tours round his constituency listening to the population's complaints and problems and writing these down in his 'prayer book'. So entrenched is brokerage in this form of string-pulling that some informants told Bax that "It's not for nothing that our national emblem is the harp" (Bax, 1976, p.2). Bax finds it difficult to state categorically how far string-pulling is actually effective, although some of his examples clearly demonstrate that manipulation can produce huge profits. The important point is that, due to the emphasis on personal relations, kinship and local knowledge (the Irishman "perceives persons not primarily in their formal roles, as bureaucrats, lawyers, company directors, but in the first place as friends, friends of friends, relatives of friends: persons who owe him or a close connection of his some favour" (*ibid.*, p. 184)), the public sees the system as one in which mediators can produce benefits, and that brokers operate with this knowledge:

"Whether or not a politician has power and influence, the people often think he has, and in many cases he has the idea that 'There is no harm in trying'. And, of course, it is in the politician's interest to keep this image alive. To attract voters implies doing favours for them, or anyway, to let them think that favours are done or can be done"

(*ibid.*, p.48).

To dispense favours, the politician is dependent on having contacts with those who control various political prizes, such as jobs, planning permission, seats on committees, etc. These are the second order resources characteristic of brokerage.

Following Boissevain, Bax is concerned to detail the characteristics which are a prerequisite of successful brokerage; these include material and social resources and particularly 'centrality in the communication network' and the ability to build up credit. In this context he develops the notion of the 'broker's broker'. The broker's brokers are used particularly^{by} the TD's to maintain close contact with a large constituency population. Such people give information on local affairs and advise the politician on strategy; they also act as 'scapegoats' and 'buffers', in that they give the TD someone to blame for failure or mistakes without himself losing too much credit. The broker's broker, however, also takes profits in terms of favours from the TD and is thus in a position to dispense these to his own supporters. As he builds up his own credit in second order resources, the broker's broker is in an ideal position to move into larger-scale political activity and many present politicians had started their careers in this way. Elsewhere Bax has refined this concept:

"In many respects a broker's broker does the same sort of work as the operating politician. He is a broker between the population and the politician. The only difference, initially anyway, is that the broker's broker is completely dependent upon the communication channels of his 'boss', the TD, for 'first order resources'. Without this relationship the broker's broker is powerless. In his own area, however, he has many advantages over the TD. He knows more about all the local problems, cleavages and small issues than his boss. He is more familiar with local influential persons, and in many respects he has closer contacts with them. By sending local 'confessions' to his boss he builds up credit for his superior, but at the same time for himself. Above all - and the people realise this - he has the power to select which person or local problem will get priority on the TD's list; he can and does manipulate his role in his own advantage to make his 'pull' stronger"

(Bax, 1970, p. 187).

The broker's broker, then, is a specialised means by which the power broker can increase his second order resources. This is a notion which will be taken up later in analysing my own data.

Bax is particularly interested in the question of why manipulation by brokers and the exchange of favours for electoral support persist, even though local government reforms have excluded the overt nepotism of the past from the present system. I find it quite surprising that Bax makes no reference here to Blok's work, undertaken at the same university over a similar period, for his analysis of the Irish situation bears much resemblance to Blok's interpretation of the persistence of mafia control. Bax suggests that although state offices now provide services, rural people still prefer an expert to mediate between them and bureaucracy, and furthermore that it is to the broker's advantage to preserve the situation of partial integration between the central and local spheres - thus, as in Sicily, state penetration remains incomplete. In Ireland, moreover, there are other factors which serve to bolster brokerage: the effect of party politics and the electoral system of Proportional Representation. Since the Irish vote predominantly along party lines and P.R. requires each party to put up a slate of candidates in every area, politicians cannot compete for votes on a purely ideological basis. Candidates are competing not only with members of other parties, but with their own party colleagues as well. Much of the competition is therefore covert and requires the constant establishment and maintenance of support and the subversion of that of competitors. Such political allegiance is largely achieved by promises of benefits, some of which must be fulfilled for the politician to retain credibility, Proportional Representation has thus served to perpetuate this style of inter-personal transaction as a means of achieving political support and the successful politician is one who makes himself indispensable as a mediator. Hence, Bax states that the arrow of causation, which formerly pointed from the state to brokerage, may in fact be turned

round,"Instead of arguing that brokerage is the effect of partial integration . . . brokerage at a certain stage of societal integration causes partial integration" (Bax, 1976, p.2). Brokerage may thus militate against integration.

Pulling strings, organised violence and extortion may seem to have little bearing on English Parish Council politics as they are generally envisaged; nevertheless, the two studies examined in detail will contribute in an important way to my analysis. Both Blok and Bax found that brokers mediate between local and external spheres and specifically preserve the gaps in communication for their own profit. The Parish Council's official role is to mediate between the local population and higher levels of local government authority; but I will also argue, by using the concept of brokerage, that it may be to the council's advantage to retain control of this communication channel, and that in doing this profits can be accumulated.

I have tried to isolate the main theoretical sources of 'brokerage' and the features which distinguish it from closely related concepts.

In summary, I should perhaps clarify the definition I am adopting in the present analysis. This is closest to Barth's in that I take a broker to be firstly a mediator between two or more individuals or groups. Beyond this, the broker is also an entrepreneur in that he innovates and seeks out opportunities with a profit motive. Finally, the profit will derive from the process of manipulation inherent in the broker's activity. Whether it is information or relationships which are manipulated and what is the

most suitable network situation for a broker to exploit must be left for empirical investigation, as must the kind of profits sought and the use made of these.

In the present thesis I am not concerned with the processes of encapsulation and state-formation, but with the most local level of political activity. The national political system is in no way taken to be static, but the directions of change are left outside the scope of this work. The focus is on a Parish Council as the pivotal group between the local population and the immediately superior authorities. The ultimately encapsulating state is at several steps removed and may use very different modes of penetration and influence from those of the local government system. What is of concern here is how political power is used by a local group to modify external forces, how it articulates the different levels of political interest and how it achieves influence in the two spheres between which it mediates. The council is examined firstly as a corporate group and secondly as a set of interacting individuals; it is at this later stage that brokerage becomes central to the analysis.

CHAPTER III

THE LOCAL CONTEXT OF PARISH COUNCIL POLITICS

The two preceding chapters have set out the theoretical and substantive framework within which local political activity will be analysed. The present chapter locates the Bridgeham Parish Council in the context of the region, the town itself, the population it represents, and the alternative channels of political expression.

The first section is largely descriptive, comprising a brief account of the region within which the study took place, in terms of both the socio-economic development of the area and the changes in local government administration. After this the focus is on Bridgeham itself, its history (with emphasis on recent development), the socio-economic characteristics of the present population and local involvement in terms of voluntary organizations. I then move on to examine specifically political dimensions, looking first at the para-political activity of certain voluntary groups and then at the level of participation through official channels. Despite a high degree of knowledge of local political issues and concern for the immediate environment, actual participation is found to be remarkably low considering the high levels of education and income in the population as a whole. Further investigation shows that socio-economic factors do not determine public participation to any marked extent and some explanation for the lack of participation is sought in local attitudes and perceptions of the system, where the importance of direct, personal relationships is demonstrated. Throughout the latter part of the chapter various factors indicate the important role played by the Parish Council in local politics and these are drawn together in the final section.

1. Regional location of the study

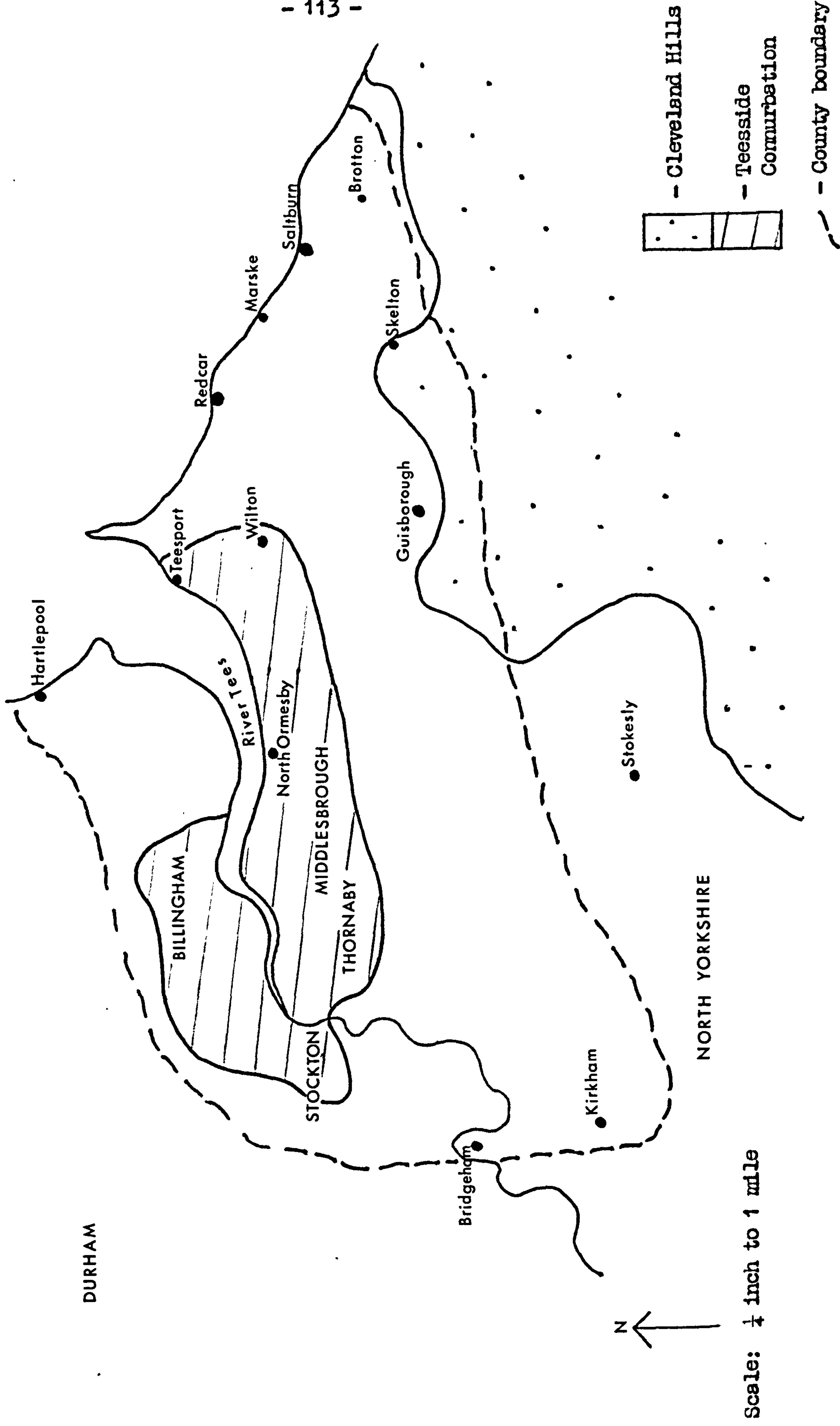
Cleveland is one of the new counties created in the local government reorganization of 1974. It comprises what was formerly Teesside County Borough, itself only created in 1967, with the addition of some areas from South Durham and North Yorkshire. The county occupies the lower valley of the River Tees and extends southwards into the Cleveland Hills. To the north of the river, Cleveland includes the coastline as far as Hartlepool (see map 1).

The present industrial base of Cleveland has a history of only 150 years.¹ Prior to this it was largely an agricultural area with some important market towns and numerous ports on the river, exporting locally-produced foodstuffs and related manufactured goods. The industrial growth of the area stemmed directly from its physical geography: the tidal river and proximity to the South Durham coalfield were the key to development. In 1830 a branchline of the Stockton - Darlington railway was built to Middlesbrough, which was then only a village but which soon became the chief coalport of the Tees. The economic history of Cleveland has been completely dominated by the phenomenal growth of Middlesbrough, first as a port and later as a manufacturing centre. Middlesbrough's population grew from 154 in 1831 to over 91,000 in 1901.

The discovery that iron ore in the Cleveland Hills was workable and of good enough quality for smelting gave a fillip to an early iron industry which had previously been of little significance. As the industry expanded the requirement for labour grew and was supplied by an immigrant population

1. Most of the historical material derives from House and Fullerton (1960) and North (1975).

Map 1. Cleveland County



drawn largely from Durham and Tyneside, but also from the Midlands, Wales and Ireland. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the introduction of several technical innovations in the iron industry which gave great impetus to the development of Teesside. In 1851 the first blast-furnace was established and in 1874 steel production began. The growth of the iron and steel industry was not confined to Middlesbrough itself; blast furnaces were also to be found up-river at Stockton and down-river at South Bank. The network of railways played an important part in the transportation of raw materials within the region and allowed the industry to spread further from the river. Closely related to the development of the iron and steel industry was the rise of engineering and shipbuilding - by the turn of the century Teesside was one of the greatest centres of ship-building in the world.

The rapid expansion of heavy industry during the nineteenth century, however, was curtailed by the rise of similar industries elsewhere in the world and the fierce competition which resulted. The disruption of international trade which resulted from the 1914-18 war also had serious consequences for the region's prosperity. Teesside firms tried to adapt to the adverse conditions of the 1920's by diversifying their range of products and the integration and amalgamation of small firms into fewer large concerns made heavy industry somewhat more able to cope with international competition. After the Second World War the iron and steel industry suffered from political instability - it was nationalised in 1949, denationalised by the next Conservative government and renationalised

by Labour in 1967. Although shipbuilding on Teesside never really recovered from the Depression, the steel industry is still a major concern in the area, with new production centres being developed at Redcar and Lackenby.

The most remarkable development since the Second World War has been the growth of the chemical industry. I.C.I. came to Billingham in 1923 and more recently have developed a large complex at Wilton, further down the river. They are now one of the largest sources of employment in Cleveland. Other new developments include refining and oil-related industries, particularly petro-chemicals, which are situated on Seal Sands at the mouth of the river. With the development of North Sea Gas and oil Teesport seems likely to be the future growth area of industry in Cleveland.

During the 1960's unemployment became an increasingly prominent problem as the post-war economic boom subsided. One of the main solutions advocated was the diversification of the industrial structure of the region, which was to a great extent dependent on a small number of traditional and capital-intensive industries. There has been some encouragement of labour-intensive light industries and the rapid growth of services in Cleveland over recent years has made these an important source of employment. The latest developments at Redcar and Seal Sands, however, are tending to continue the dominance of the area by the steel and chemical industries.

The new county, then, is an area of mixed urban and rural settlement, with landscapes ranging from the heavy industry on the river to the moorlands of the Cleveland Hills. After the Second World War the population increased considerably due to the industrial expansion, particularly in chemicals. The increase in employment was largely in Teesside itself, but

the county as a whole is the only part of North-East England which is currently experiencing net in-migration. Despite the economic dominance of Teesside, all parts of the county have recently been subject to population increase because of the modern trend towards commuting. People are moving out of conurbations into the more attractive surroundings of rural areas, preferring to travel to work rather than live close to industry. This has affected the whole of Cleveland as all the outlying villages are within daily travelling distance of the centres of employment.

Cleveland may be divided into three zones, each with fairly distinct social and physical characteristics and each now functioning as an administrative unit of the new county authority, which has its headquarters in Middlesbrough. On Teesside itself, many of the old urban areas have been cleared or are scheduled for demolition. Some housing is being replaced, but in general the central areas are being devoted to shops and offices. The population is being rehoused in new estates outside the conurbation, resulting in the southward spread of urban growth. The considerable upheaval caused by redeveloping the city centre is still in process, as is the building of new roads to give speedy access from the residential parts to the centre. This area is now administered by Middlesbrough District Council.

In East Cleveland the population is largely scattered in small villages, many of them formerly associated with the iron-stone mining. Several of these have suffered severe economic decline in the years since the mining ceased. The only towns of any size are Guisborough, a market town on the plain and now the headquarters of the new Langbaugh District Council, and Redcar, Saltburn and Marske on the coast. All the settlements

have some new housing, either private developments or local authority estates. A small amount of light industry has been established in East Cleveland in an attempt to ease the unemployment problem, but most of the working population, apart from the farmers, travel to the steel and chemical works on Teesside.

Agriculture is still important in West Cleveland, where the farm land is the richest in the county. Because of its rural atmosphere and pleasant landscape this has been the scene of the greatest expansion in housing. The area is now predominantly residential, with new private housing estates having transformed the old farming villages. The increase in population is largely due to in-migrant management and professional people, the great majority of whom are employed on Teesside. Stockton is the only large industrial town in the area, which is under the authority of the Stockton District Council. The town of Bridgeham was formerly in the area of Stokesly Rural District Council in the North Riding of Yorkshire; it is now in the Stockton District of Cleveland. Bridgeham was one of the places which chose to retain its Parish Council at the time of reorganization.

2. History of the town.

The history of Bridgeham itself has been much influenced by that of Teesside. It is an ancient settlement mentioned in the Domesday Book,¹ and is sited on a low-lying, northward-jutting peninsula, about half a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, surrounded on three sides by the River Tees. The parish stretches over a mile to the south and almost three

1. The main sources of this material are Graves (1808) and Wardell (1957)

miles from east to west. But the old town lies entirely within the bend of the river, and until this century there were only scattered farms outside the town.

The Tees seems to have been bridged at Bridgeham as early as 1200, making the settlement an important point on the north-south route. In 1400 a stone bridge was built (which despite a nineteenth-century effort to replace it, still carries all the traffic through Bridgeham) and by the sixteenth century the town was famous for its markets. Up to the early nineteenth century Bridgeham increased in importance due to being the lowest bridging point on the Tees: it exported agricultural produce, manufactured goods, salmon and lead down the river to London and had four annual fairs. At this time there were many local industries: brick and tile manufacture, rope-making, linen weaving, cabinet-making, clay pipe manufacture, corn milling, brewing and coopering, fellmongering, tanning and paper-making and there were numerous prosperous merchants. The river was the key to Bridgeham's industry, though its frequent flooding made it a danger too. Paper and corn milling continued into the late nineteenth century and flour milling and rope manufacture until after the Second World War, but only the fellmongery now remains of the traditional industries and this is no longer a family firm.

The first bridge at Stockton - lower down the Tees - was built in 1771, and from 1800 Bridgeham was eclipsed by Stockton as the most important town on the Tees. Bridgeham men were closely involved in the early days of the railway and the town claims to have been the site of the inaugural meeting of the Stockton-Darlington run. A station just north of the river served the town from 1825 and in 1850 a viaduct of 43 arches was built right

through the centre of the town. But despite this, Bridgeham's local importance declined in direct relation to the growth of heavy industry lower down the Tees during the late nineteenth century. By 1867 the weekly market and three of the annual fairs had become extinct and the October Fair now remaining has been reduced to a fun fair. Up to 1955 cattle, sheep and horses were traded there, but the once famous cheese fair disappeared in the Second World War.

The Town Hall was built in 1710 and most of the High Street is Georgian or older. The old town is much treasured today, but its existence is perhaps symptomatic of Bridgeham's early development and later decline. There is none of the Victorian grandeur in Bridgeham, which is so common elsewhere on Teesside.

This fluctuating growth rate is reflected in the population figures for Bridgeham (see Table 1). The total population increased gradually from the time of the first census to a nineteenth-century peak in 1851. It then went through a period of minimal growth until after the First World War - in other words, just when Teesside was expanding rapidly, Bridgeham was stagnating. From 1921 - 1951 the population was more or less stable. Recently, however, there has been considerable development in Bridgeham (see map 2). The first housing outside the old town was built along the main roads south (The Spital and Leven Road) between the wars. Just before the Second World War a council estate - Willey Flatts - was begun out to the south-west. This was completed in the 1950's and allowed many working people to move out of the poor and overcrowded conditions of the 'wynds' (narrow alleys) off the High Street. But it was the 1960's which saw the start of real growth in Bridgeham. Due to improved communications and the

TABLE 1. Total Population of Bridgeham Parish 1801 - 1971

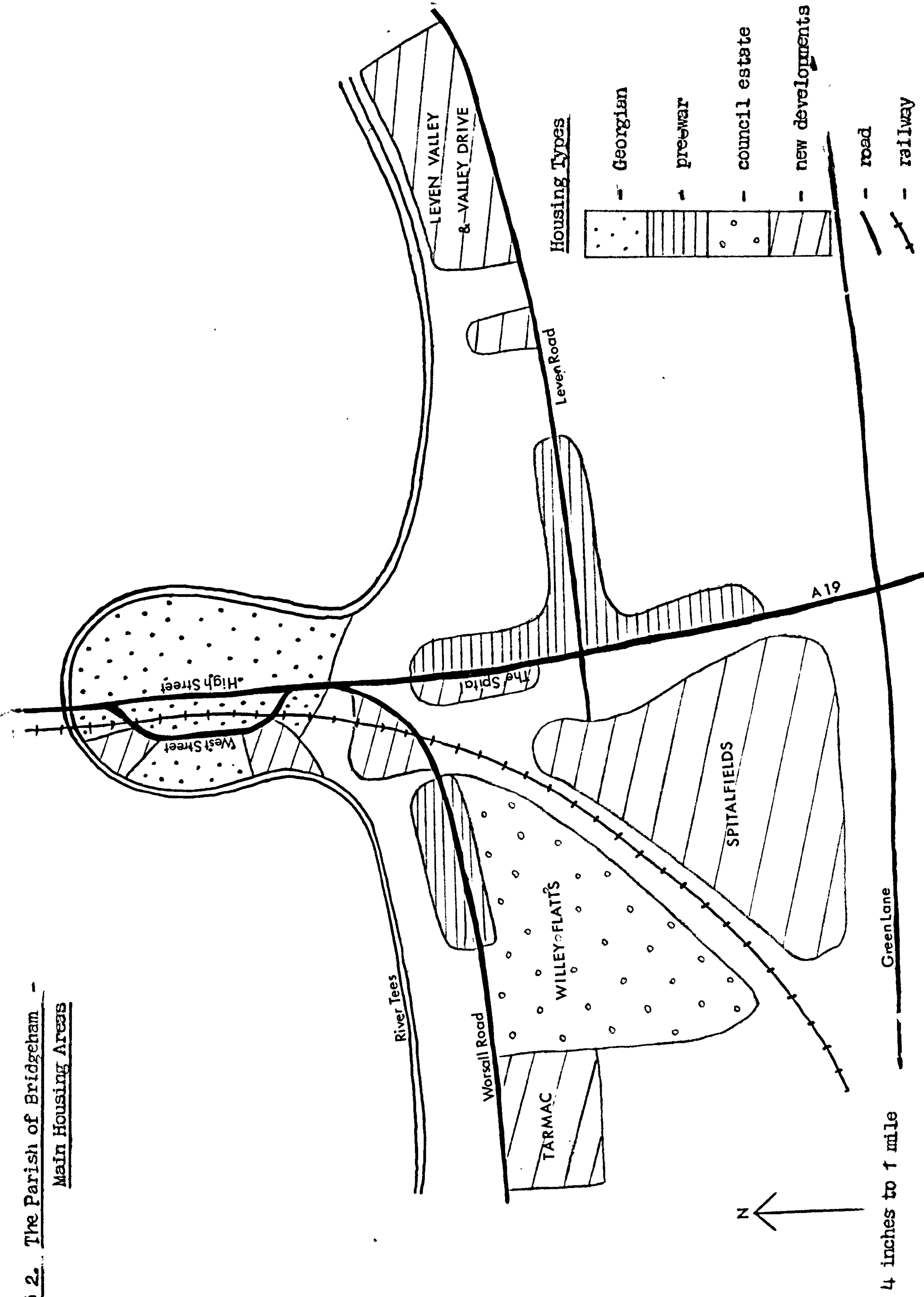
<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>% Growth</u>
1801	1,300	27%
1811	1,431	
1821	1,504	
1831	1,636	
1841	1,511	
1851	1,647	4%
1861	---	
1871	1,340	
1881	1,486	
1891	1,485	
1901	1,597	3%
1911	1,617	
1921	1,717	
1931	1,714	
1941	---	
1951	1,779	60%
1961	1,910	
1971	2,922	

desire of professional people and managers to live outside industrial areas Bridgeham became a residential area for Teesside. Between 1961 and 1971 the population increased dramatically - by 35%. The Spitalfields estate was begun in the early 1960's and is still expanding. This comprises three- and four-bedroomed houses, largely occupied by professional and white-collar workers. In the late 60's the Tarmac estate went up: smaller private houses and bungalows bought mainly by skilled and semi-skilled manual and white-collar workers, several of whom have family ties on the council estate. After this development was even further from the old town. Very large detached houses were built on Valley Drive and smaller dwellings on the Leven Valley estate. (Quantitative details are given in the tables which follow).

This rapid expansion has been almost wholly confined to housing; there has been very little growth of employment opportunities in Bridgeham. Almost all the newcomers and an increasing proportion of local people work outside the town, in the industries and services of Teesside. There is only one shop outside the High Street - on the council estate - yet although the in-migrants tend to be car-owning commuters, the old town is the main shopping centre for residents. There are still many small family retail businesses in the town, but several supermarkets have opened to serve the enlarged population. Bridgeham is also developing into an important service centre, with estate agents, banks, solicitors and consulting firms now as numerous as the shops in the High Street.

At the time of fieldwork the A19 - the main York-Newcastle link - still ran through the High Street, causing considerable problems due to the weight and volume of traffic using it. The new A19 was due to open in 1976 and it was hoped that the consequent detrunking of the High Street would

Map 2. The Parish of Bridgeham -
Main Housing Areas



solve a problem which had occupied local residents for over a hundred years and help to retain the charm of the town as a quiet backwater, away from the sounds and smells of heavy industry on which its population depends.

Thus, the present situation of Bridgeham is that of an ancient settlement which has developed into a dormitory town for those who run the industries of Teesside. The new estates are largely occupied by in-migrant commuters, but the existence of the old town and a number of families of several generations' residence creates more of a local focus than is often found in suburbia.

3. Socio-economic composition of the present population

The socio-economic composition of the Bridgeham population is summarised in the tables and histograms (see pp.125-8). These figures are taken from the last census, which was held in 1971. Since then house-building in Bridgeham has continued and as all the recent dwellings are of the more expensive, owner-occupied type, the increase of population over the last few years can only have exaggerated the trends already visible in the 1971 figures.

The present age-sex structure of the total population shows a remarkably pyramidal histogram,

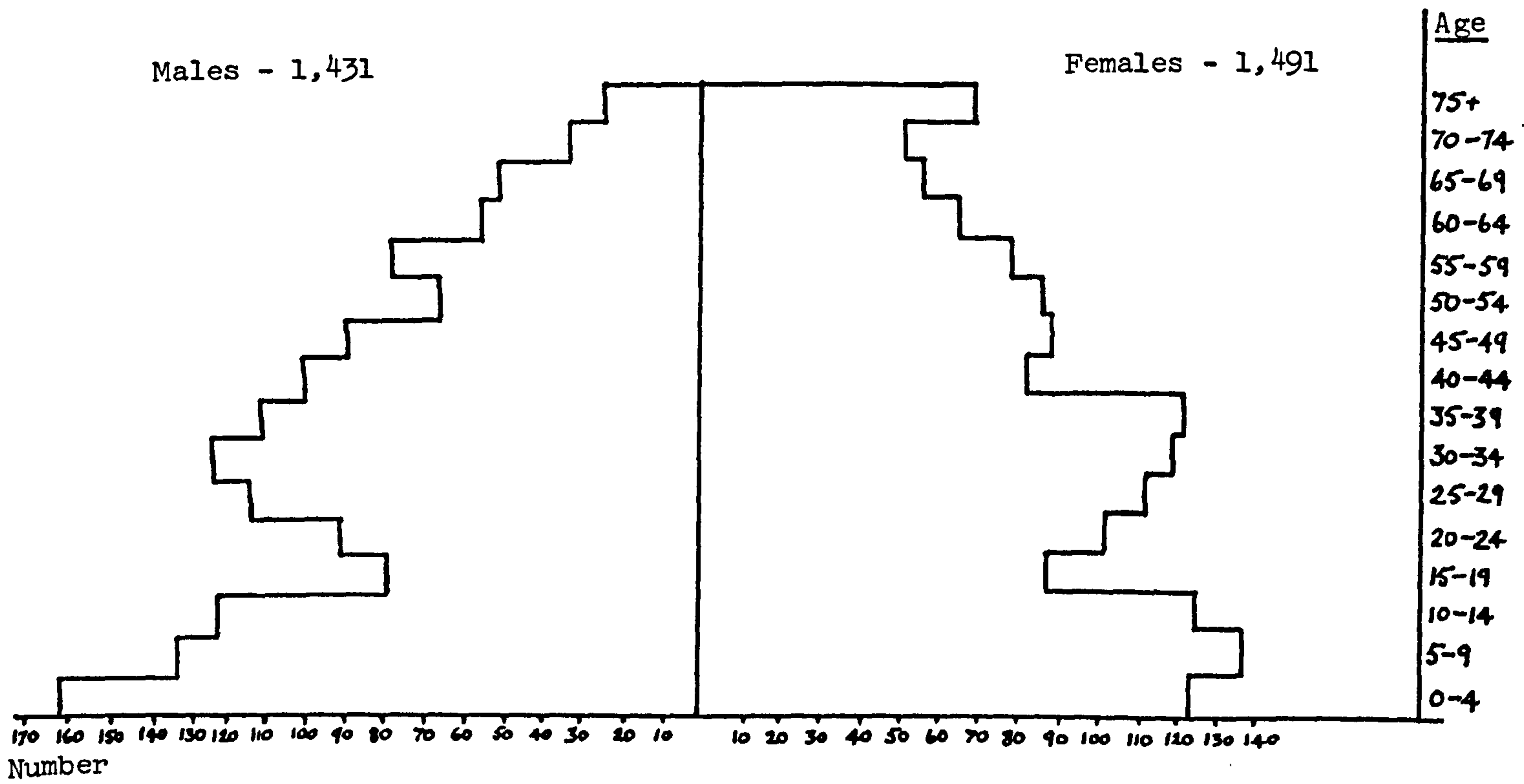
(see Figure 1). Bridgeham has a very large number of children - more than 20% of the population being under 15 years old - and a low average age, over 60% being under 40. That this is accounted for by the young in-migrant families (rather than, say, a high number of children per family) is evident by comparing the histograms for different electoral districts, which show that parents and young children predominate on the new estates (see Figures 2, 3 and 4). The small number

of people in the 15-25 age range probably indicates the high number in further education and the lack of employment and housing facilities for young single people in Bridgeham. The in-migration rate is very high, and again varies between different localities of the town (see Table 2). House- and car-ownership are high and more than half the household heads are in the first six of the Registrar-General's Socio-Economic Groups (S.E.G's) (see Tables 3 and 4).

To summarise the census figures, Bridgeham is an area of predominantly high income, mobile young families, but the socio-economic differences between the various residential districts of the parish are fairly marked. The findings of the 1975 random-sample survey cast further light on the internal differences in the Bridgeham population and include housing areas not built at the time of the last census (Leven Valley and Valley Drive, see Map 2)¹. Since the survey interview was concerned with individuals rather than households and many of the respondents were women in part-time jobs, housewives and retired people, the data on incomes is not very precisely related to residential areas. But the present or last occupation

1. Further details of the results of the survey are given in the Appendix (see p. 311). Here suffice it is to say that I have selected as illustrative samples of internal variation those housing areas where the population showed considerable homogeneity in socio-economic terms. These can be briefly characterised as follows: High Street (old housing); Willey Flatts (council estate); Tarmac (small private houses); Spitalfields (middle-range houses); Leven Road (pre-war and new, all large houses); The Spital (new, large houses), Leven Valley/Valley Drive (most expensive and largest houses). There were 93 survey respondents in Bridgeham. Although a random sample, they were not evenly distributed in the different housing areas as these are of different size. Furthermore, some respondents lived in areas which were not easily characterized and have been omitted for the sake of simplicity. The numbers in each housing area were therefore as follows: High Street (10); Willey Flatts (16); Tarmac (13); Spitalfields (25); Leven Road (5); The Spital (5) and Leven Valley/Valley Drive (11). The total, 85, is very small and all the tables are therefore expressed in percentage terms.

Figure 1. Age-sex Structure of the Total Population, 1971



More than 60% are under 40 years old.
More than 20% are under 20 years old.

2. Spitalfields Estate

3. Council Estate

4. High Street Area

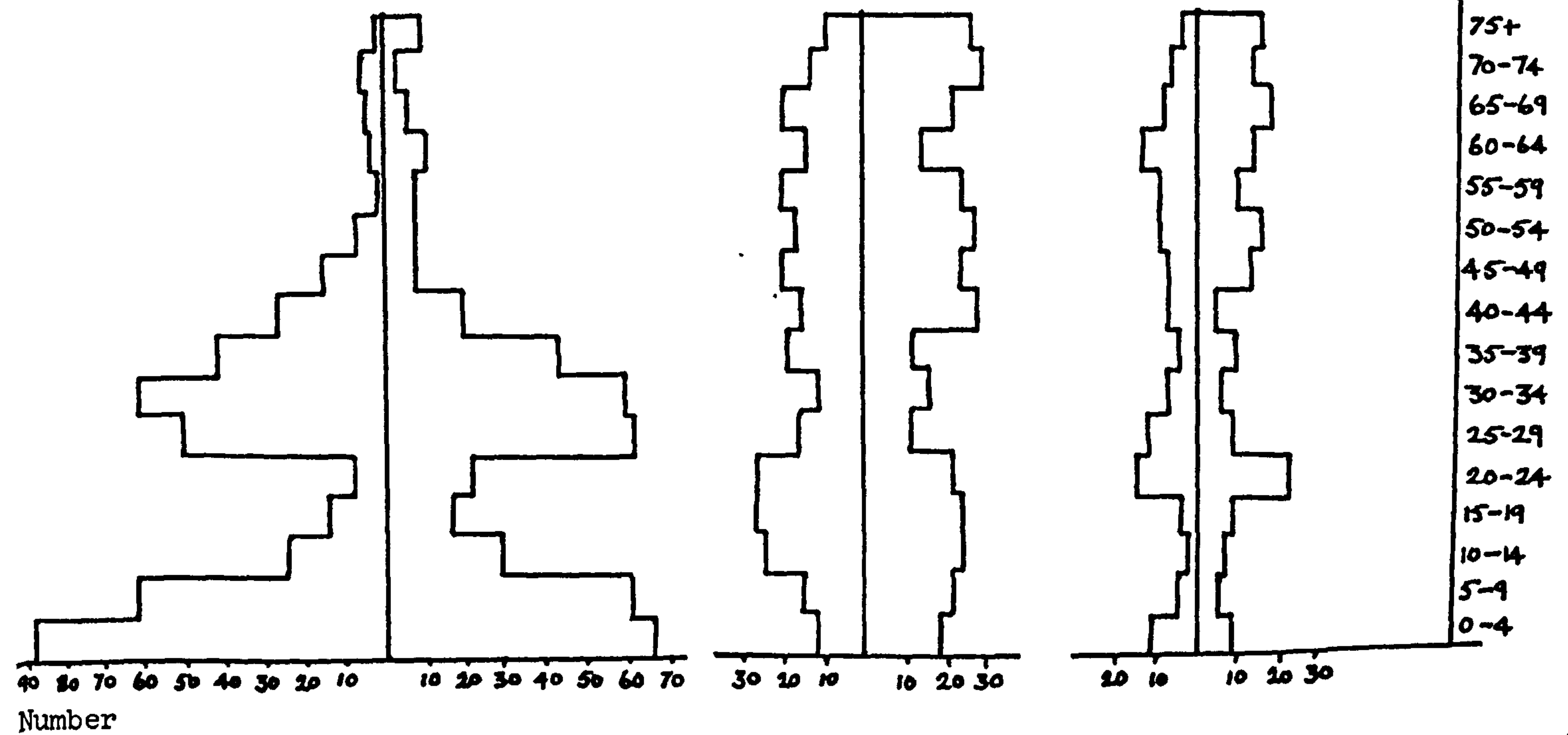


TABLE 3. Household Information, 1971

(Taken from the Registrar General's 10% sample figures)

	Electoral Districts						Totals
	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Households	143	230	230	169	140	48	960
Persons	432	831	609	591	303	154	2,850
Total Rooms	858	1,315	1,040	931	649	327	5,120
Owner-occupied	119	215	72	36	66	45	553
Council houses	0	3	143	126	0	0	272
Rented - unfurnished	16	12	11	7	65	1	112
Rented - furnished	7	4	5	0	5	0	17
Households with car	73	175	81	89	52	22	492
Households with 2+ cars	54	47	30	19	12	25	187

Average number per household - 3

Average number per room - less than 2

57% of houses are owner-occupied

28% of houses are Council rented

13% of houses are privately rented

70% of households have a car

20% of households have 2 or more cars

TABLE 4. Socio-economic Groups of Household Heads, 1971

(Taken from the Registrar General's 10% sample figures)

S.E.G. of Household Head	Electoral Districts						Total	% of total population
	6	7	8	9	10	11		
1	3	2	0	0	0	1	6	7%
2	2	6	3	0	2	1	14	16%
4	2	8	0	2	1	1	14	16%
5	1	4	0	3	1	1	10	12%
6	1	2	2	3	1	0	9	10%
7	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1%
8	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	3%
9	2	2	6	4	1	0	15	17%
10	0	0	2	2	1	0	5	6%
11	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	3%
12	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2%
16	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1%
17	1	0	1	0	3	0	5	6%

39% of household heads are in Socio-Economic Groups 1, 2 and 4, i.e. professional and managerial

of the household heads does demonstrate considerable variation between areas. For the sake of simplicity I have grouped the occupational categories on a very broad basis into only three divisions: 'professional and managerial', 'industrial/labour' (including both skilled and unskilled manual and technical workers) and 'offices and shops' (including all non-professional service personnel). This may seem a gross over-simplification, but the categories do reflect the main occupational divisions found in the population. Table 5 indicates the occupational variation between the residential areas of Bridgeham and these differences may reasonably be taken

Table 5. Occupation of household head - % in each category.

	Professional/ Managerial	Industrial/ Labour	Offices/ Shops
Leven Valley	87.5	12.5	0
High Street	20	60	20
Spitalfields	61	22	17
Willey Flatts	8	67	25
Tarmac	10	70	20
The Spital	75	0	25
Leven Road	100	0	0

to include the education and income variables associated with occupation. With regard to the place of work, residential area is an extremely significant variable (see Table 6).

Table 6. Place of work of respondents - % in each category

	Bridgeham	With one mile of Bridgeham	Teesside	Elsewhere
Leven Valley	10	0	60	30
High Street	60	30	10	0
Spitalfields	24	0	52	24
Willey Flatts	43	29	28	0
Tarmac	39	15	46	0
The Spital	25	0	75	0
Leven Road	25	25	25	25

Colin Bell has noted that "In the sphere of private housing . . . it can be argued that the prices of houses act as a social sieve, with graduated meshes as it were, through which drop each homogeneous section of the population round the edge of the towns" (Bell, 1968, p. 129). This metaphor seems to be particularly apt for Bridgeham, where the population of each area of new housing has fairly distinct socio-economic characteristics. Yet the clear divisions associated with such gross socio-economic variables do not seem to determine social activity beyond the work-place to the same extent as has been found elsewhere (e.g. Stacey, 1960). In neither church attendance nor regular pub visiting is residential area at all significant.

The gross socio-economic variation contained within the population nevertheless has an important influence on attitudes within the local area. These were not explored in the survey, but emerged throughout the fieldwork period.

High income and occupational status are generally assumed to imply non-local origins and the housing areas are therefore associated with a local/non-local division which pervades Bridgeham. It is generally felt, for example, that the High Street is inhabited wholly by people who were born in the town and have never left it. The Spitalfields and Leven Valley estates, by contrast, are thought to comprise entirely in-migrant populations, all originating from other parts of the country and having no local ties. Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate that housing area is not, in fact correlated to

Table 7. Place of birth - respondents, (expressed in percentage terms)

	Bridgeham	Elsewhere on Teesside	Elsewhere
Leven Valley	0	18	82
High Street	20	0	80
Spitalfields	0	28	72
Willey Flatts	25	56	19
Tarmac	0	77	23
The Spital	0	40	60
Leven Road	0	20	80
Total	7 %	36 %	57 %

Table 8. Place of birth - respondents' spouses (expressed in percentage terms)

	Bridgeham	Elsewhere on Teesside	Elsewhere
Leven Valley	0	30	70
High Street	30	50	20
Spitalfields	12	17	71
Willey Flatts	25	33	42
Tarmac	23	69	8
The Spital	0	20	80
Leven Road	20	0	80
Total	17	31	52

any definitive extent with a local/non-local division. The inhabitants of the new estates have indeed been more mobile and the only respondents born in Bridgeham do live in the High Street or Willey Flatts (two and four individuals respectively); but in several other cases the spouses were born in the town and most areas have a high proportion of both respondents and spouses who originated in the Teesside region. Furthermore only 5% of respondents have in fact lived nowhere else but Bridgeham. Thus, according to the statistics, 'localness' is a very relative dimension.

Although not substantiated by the evidence, however, these attitudes towards the internal differentiation of the town were found to be an important influence on people's view of their locality and how it operated. The local/non-local dimension is seen in zero-sum terms - people are either 'Bridgeham' or 'not Bridgeham' - and it is often cited as the basis of social divisions in the town. The following comments occurred fairly frequently in one form or another during the survey:

- "We used to know everyone in Bridgeham, but now there are all these new people"
- "They won't stay; all they do is sleep here; they're not interested in Bridgeham"
- "They want to take over. What's it got to do with them? They're not from round here"
- "A lot of the old people were born here and have never left the place"
- "All the old people are against change; they want things to stay the same".

As will be shown later in this chapter, neither residential area and the associated economic characteristics nor length of residence were found to be marked determinants of political activity. Nevertheless, this does not discount the influence of such perceived divisions in the community and the

attribution of a local/non-local label in particular is an important influence on the prestige of local politicians and on their ability to communicate with the various sectors of the population who hold such stereotyped views.

4. Involvement in the local area

Having referred to the existence and possible importance of such divisive attitudes, however, the other side of the coin must also be presented. 65% of the Bridgeham sample have been at their current address for five years or less, yet knowledge of the local area and involvement in local affairs are both high compared with the other areas covered in our survey (see Appendix). Even with such a short average span of residence among the sample, 58% belong to at least one voluntary association, of which 51% are based in Bridgeham itself. For such a small place this seems a remarkably high proportion and I think it demonstrates a deliberate effort on the part of in-comers to join in the community life, avail themselves of its facilities and participate in local affairs.

A factor which emerged from the survey and which was expressed by several people in conversation was that many of these people had chosen Bridgeham from several possible residential locations within commuting distance of their work because it has a core of long-standing residents and a degree of tradition absent in most new housing areas: in short, they felt it was 'a community'. Social scientists may argue about the definition of 'community' (Freilich, 1963; Stein, 1960), or even dispute that the term has any analytical value (Stacey, 1969), but ordinary people, particularly those with a variety of residential experience, set great store by what they call a community and several pointed out its rarity value. This is not a unique phenomenon.

Pahl, for example, has stated that "Many middle-class people move out to a village in order to be a member of a 'real community', which, in practice, means 'joining things'" (Pahl, 1965, p.15). Elsewhere, Pahl has developed this view by refining Merton's localist/cosmopolitan distinction (Merton 1957) to include what he calls 'localist cosmopolitans'. Although residentially mobile, such people he says

"Have defined, as part of the ingredients of their life-styles, the putting down of localistic roots. Almost without exception they are very quick to describe the friendliness and feeling of community in the village (i.e. among themselves). They are equally firm in their objections to new development . . . which is inevitably 'out of character'. The 'localist' cosmopolitans are the self-appointed guardians of tradition and rusticity as they define it" (Pahl, 1968, p. 274).

Although this description certainly fits many of the in-migrants to Bridgeham, particularly with reference to the interest in conservation, it is to some extent too great a generalisation. There are also many newcomers who are not interested in the town and its development and, more importantly perhaps, there are locals who are as involved as the newcomers in conservation matters, for the emergence of conservation as a political issue in Bridgeham pre-dates the main period of expansion. Despite its small size, Bridgeham is not a village, but a town containing a range of occupational and educational strata. Interest in 'the community' and concern for preservation is therefore not a recent phenomenon; there have always been what Watson calls 'burgesses' (Watson, 1964) - local businessmen, shopkeepers and professionals whose interests and sense of identity are primarily local. In Bridgeham, such people were involved in conservation and community activities long before the arrival of the in-migrant professional and managerial people Watson would call 'spiralists'.

In general, voluntary association membership in Bridgeham was not found to vary with the residential mobility of respondents. There was, it is true, a significant difference between voluntary association membership of respondents in the various residential areas (Table 9), with the Leven

Table 9. Percentage belonging to voluntary organizations

	Belonging to one or more organizations	Not belonging to any organizations
Leven Valley	82	18
High Street	50	50
Spitalfields	76	24
Willey Flatts	44	56
Tarmac	31	69
The Spital	40	60
Leven Road	100	0

Road, Leven Valley and Spitalfields people showing a much greater tendency to belong to such groups than those of the Tarmac, Willey Flatts and High Street areas. Whilst not entirely discounting the argument that leisure associations are predominantly attended by middle-income and more educated people, it must also be remembered that new residents are more likely to join societies as a means of making local contacts and thus their membership may decline as years of residence increase. Furthermore, if we look only at those organizations which are based in Bridgeham itself, the difference is less striking (Table 10). Thus, as far as specifically local organizational

Table 10. Location of voluntary organizations (percentage in each location)

	Based in Bridgeham	Based Elsewhere
The Spital	43	57
Leven Road	40	60
Leven Valley	29	81
High Street	62	38
Spitalfields	39	61
Willey Flatts	86	14
Tarmac	17	83
Total	43	57

activity is concerned neither socio-economic status nor residential mobility are highly correlated with membership.

I do not entirely accept Pahl's view that middle-class in-comers equate 'joining things' with 'community'. But voluntary organization membership would, nevertheless, seem to be an indicator of the level of involvement in the locality and concern for local affairs. Active associations in Bridgeham range from the darts teams of several High Street pubs to the National Housewives' Register ('a meeting point for the lively-minded woman') and membership and levels of activity are similarly various. The great majority of associations to which Bridgeham residents belong are social and sports concerns (see Table 11), and of the 48 organizations listed in the

Table 11. Main Types of voluntary organizations (percentage of each type)

	Social	Sports	All Others
Leven Valley	14	50	36
High Street	25	50	25
Spitalfields	23	42	35
Willey Flatts	57	0	43
Tarmac	50	17	33
The Spital	18	9	73
Leven Road	25	20	55

public library as being based in Bridgeham, 34 are branches of national or regional bodies. The implications of membership for local political activity are therefore limited, but many of the associations are a means of fostering interest in the locality. The scouts, for example, have been involved in clearing footpaths of litter, the Round Table has taken part in local improvement projects and those organizations which invite speakers to their meetings

often have lectures on local history or conservation. Even where voluntary associational activity is in no way oriented to the local area the meetings engender social interaction and hence give rise to an exchange of views and the spread of information. Such informal communication channels may well be important in the formulation of public opinion and contribute to unofficial participation in terms of support for local politicians.

Voluntary organizational activity is an easily identifiable index of involvement in local affairs. Equally significant, but less readily quantifiable, is the general level of interest in and knowledge of the local area. Here I would emphasise that both professional people and manual workers, long-standing residents and newcomers all expressed views which indicated either a strong interest in Bridgeham or a complete lack of concern for the town. It would therefore be incorrect to associate any residential or socio-economic category with more or less involvement in local matters. Knowledge of particular plans was not great (see below), but 72% of the random sample read a local paper and obviously noted Bridgeham affairs with particular interest. Moreover, from my participant observation it was clear that the town and its affairs were a major topic of conversation. Suffice it to state in summary that awareness of the immediate environment was generally high and the majority of the population in all parts of the town wished to preserve the character of Bridgeham.

5. Para-political activity.

I have shown that voluntary organizational membership is high in Bridgeham and that much local social activity takes place in the context of leisure associations. These organizations may be satisfying the wish for involvement in local affairs, but here I will examine whether such groups have, in fact, any political influence.

With regard to actual political involvement two main categories of voluntary associations may be differentiated: those which have been established specifically to influence decisions concerning certain aspects of local public life, and those whose primary function is not political, but which may become involved in decision making in the event of certain contingencies.

To take the second category first, it is possible to imagine situations in which almost any voluntary association might temporarily take a political stance and use its organizational resources to put pressure on decision makers. For example, if the hall where the Badminton Club meets were to be threatened with closure, it would be extremely probable that the club secretary would write to the Parish or District Council to request that they try to prevent this happening. Members of the club might also approach the councillors they knew to state their case and try to exert pressure on the relevant authority that way. There might even be joint action with other associations using the hall. Such activity must be seen as political, despite its temporary nature. The organizations themselves, however, cannot be described as political bodies since this aspect is not their raison d'etre, but merely a response to isolated contingencies affecting their members and the pursuit of the association's activities.

The voluntary associations which I describe as para-political are those which exist primarily for political functions and whose activities affect the general public beyond their own membership (see the definition on page 41). These are not however, truly political groups either because their activities are episodic or because they operate only within a narrow sphere. There are three such para-political groups in Bridgeham: the Civic

Society and two residents associations.¹ By far the most active of these is the Civic Society.

Bridgeham Civic Society was formed in 1962, with three objectives: to stimulate public interest in the town of Bridgeham, to preserve the town's character, and to initiate schemes for improvement and ensure that developments were in keeping with the environment. In 1975 the total membership did not seem to be accurately known, but was something over 300. Not all the members are, in fact, Bridgeham residents, since people who have moved away or live nearby are also concerned with the preservation of the town. Membership is important to the society for the money brought in by subscriptions and also as a source of support for fund-raising functions - barbecues, wine and cheese evenings, etc., often held in places of architectural interest. The chairman described the members as being generally 'middle-class and middle-income' and also largely recent in-migrants. There are only two members from the council estate, both of whom are former Parish Councillors.

The important part of the Civic Society, however, is the committee, on which there were 21 people in 1975, leaving three places unfilled. There were only three Bridgeham-born men on the committee: two High Street shopkeepers and a labourer, who is also a churchwarden and the people's representative on the Weigh and Tolls Committee (see below, p.197). The overlap between

1. There had at one time been a Chamber of Trade in Bridgeham, concerned with the commercial life of the town, but by 1975 this was defunct. There were also, of course, a local Conservative Association and a Labour Club, though the latter was not based in Bridgeham. These seemed to have very little influence in local decision-making, although they may well be more active at election times than they were during the field-work period. Many writers attribute the failure of local government by representation to the poor organization of local political parties (e.g. Greene, op. cit., p. 12). In Bridgeham there is a further explanation namely, that the town is now administratively within Cleveland, but yet remains in the parliamentary constituency of Richmond, in North Yorkshire. Had any of these three organizations been active I would have described them as para-political.

the Civic Society Committee and the Parish Council is particularly significant, with five people being members of both. There have been three chairmen so far, all of whom had also served on the Parish Council at some time. The present chairman took office in 1973; he is a retired army officer, now working in a university and his wife, Margaret Brown¹, is both chairman of the Parish Council and a District Councillor.

The Civic Society stimulates public interest by being active in the local area and publicising its achievements in the press and by a newsletter circulated to members. And its achievements have indeed been considerable. An early success was that in 1965, in response to Civic Society pressure, 150 buildings in the town were listed as being of special architectural or historic interest and therefore protected from development. The society also claims some credit for the designation of old Bridgeham as a Conservation Area in 1970. Two major improvement schemes have increased public awareness of the society. Firstly, it has established a Town Trail, for which plaques have been put up on buildings of interest in the town and an explanatory leaflet provided to enable visitors to follow the best route. Secondly, with a grant from European Architectural Heritage Year a derelict field near the town centre was revitalised and made into a small park and play area. For both these ventures the Civic Society received a monetary contribution and considerable political support from the Parish Council; but it also depended on the resources of its own members for the research, design and implementation of the projects. Other large-scale ventures are envisaged for the future, particularly the restoration of the arches under

1. All personal names are pseudonyms.

the Town Hall, which have been bricked up for many years. There are also smaller issues, such as the general improvement of the riverside footpaths.

One of the most important functions of the Civic Society, however, is the watchdog role it plays with regard to planning. Working within its own guidelines of retaining - and in some cases re-establishing - the character of the Georgian High Street, it seeks to implement certain colour schemes, insist on chimneys, clay pantiled roofs and suitable facades on all buildings ^{to} and/prevent the destruction of historic parts of the town. This arouses more conflict than do specific improvement projects since many of the people affected are running businesses. In vetting the relevant planning applications and submitting recommendations to the District Office the Civic Society Planning Committee must therefore be particularly careful to argue a good case. This committee is an important index of how such voluntary organizations operate. It comprises two men and a woman who are an architect, a lecturer in art and design and the former chairman of the society who is also a good amateur architect, a long-resident and a considerable local historian. Clearly, such a committee is ideally equipped to understand the implications of the proposals, comment on them and suggest alternatives. Their combined skills allow them to present both forceful and well-argued cases to the District Planning Committee and must be to a marked extent responsible for ^{the} organization's recent successes.

The Civic Society has a further advantage in the large representation of Parish Councillors among its committee members and particularly in the active part played by Margaret Brown (a former secretary of the society). This means that Civic Society and Parish Council responses to planning applications can be co-ordinated (although there is not always complete agreement, since the Parish Council is concerned with the provision of services and commercial interests as well as conservation). It also means that Margaret

Brown as District Councillor can advise, as she does for the Parish Council, on the probable attitudes of the District Planning Committee. In the sphere of conservation the Civic Society is therefore a body of considerable importance in Bridgeham, contriving to exert a notable degree of pressure with results which affect the whole population.

The Bridgeham Residents and Tenants Association was initiated in 1952 as the Willey Flatts Residents Association to be an organ of protest against a sudden large increase in council house rents. This failed to have any effect and the society was then dormant for several years. In 1967 it was resurrected because local people were so annoyed by the Parish and Rural District Council's failure to provide any amenities for children. Since the great majority of young families in Bridgeham at that time lived on Willey Flatts, the society was again based there. Its first effort was to raise money for children's play equipment on the estate. The organization has functioned continually since then, but now involves people from all over Bridgeham and has over 200 members. There is a committee of four, of whom three are in manual occupations; two of these live on the council estate, one on the neighbouring Tarmac and the fourth on Valley Drive. A Parish Councillor, Ernest Nelson, is the secretary and treasurer and from the meetings I attended he seemed to be the moving force behind the association. Certainly, he influences the reputation of the group, which Margaret Brown referred to as "Ernest Nelson's residents association". Since the society exists to develop social activities and generally look after amenities and the council estate is the area most obviously lacking in both these, much of the activity is focussed on Willey Flatts.

This residents association is first and foremost a fund-raising body, rather than a pressure group. It relies on its own resources more than its political influence, holding jumble sales, raffles, an Annual Sports Day etc.,

and spending the proceeds on such things as equipment for the junior football club, children's Christmas parties and small improvement schemes. Much of the work of both organization and implementation is done by Nelson himself, who in 1975, for example, spent many evenings with the help of local children in clearing a local stream and building a bridge over it. A recent example of a Residents Association project interestingly demonstrates the inter-connections of the associations under review here. When the Civic Society made the field mentioned above available for public use the Residents and Tenants Association, assisted by a Parish Council contribution, raised the money to buy swings and a see-saw, which they themselves erected on the field. The group also seeks to exert pressure on decision-makers, either through Nelson's Parish Council membership or by writing letters to external bodies. They too, examine planning applications for the whole town and members from the different estates bring complaints and queries to the meetings and the association as a body makes representations to the appropriate authorities; the skills available within the body of members, however, are significantly less than those of the Civic Society. It therefore serves as another watchdog on local affairs, but with the main emphasis being on the provision of amenities. The Residents and Tenants Association has also been involved in a county-wide rates action group. Thus, although still heavily influenced by the affairs of the council estate, its interests have considerably broadened since its inception.

The Spitalfields Residents Association is another group which began as a local protest organization, but in this case activities have declined rather than widened in scope. The association was started in 1964, the early days of the estate, as a means of liaison between the residents, the builder and the local authority (the North Riding County Council). Its secondary function was

to provide entertainments such as a bonfire, annual dinner dances and children's parties. Residents of the estate become members automatically and funds are raised by special events where necessary. In the early days interest was high and there was much support for the group's activities. A newsletter was put out and a committee of 12 met regularly, with Richard Waite, the present vice-chairman of the Parish Council, as an early member.

For the first few years this residents association achieved a considerable amount for its members, both by mediating with the builder and local authorities and by organizing a degree of self-help among residents. Rights of way through the estate have been protected, pavements kept in good repair, grass replanted and drains unblocked, largely by the association finding out where responsibility lay and putting pressure on the appropriate people. It still assists new residents with their problems and has built up a good relationship with the builder. This kind of activity, however, was to a great extent associated with the newness of the estate and as such has considerably declined recently as people have become more established. There is now a committee of only three, which meets on an ad hoc basis and social events have almost ceased. The chairman described the association as having a 'watching brief' over the affairs of the estate.

Nevertheless, the Spitalfields Residents Association is concerned to some extent with matters of wider importance. It too has links with the rates action group and has co-operated with the Residents and Tenants Association over this at joint meetings. As a body it is also concerned with planning applications which affect the estate and the provision of services in the town. The builder has recently applied for permission to put up a pub near the entrance to the estate and the residents association is very much

against this as they do not want increased noise and traffic. But, unlike the Civic Society and Residents and Tenants Association, the Spitalfields group does not make a continuous attempt to watch planning developments. They only heard of the proposed pub because Margaret Brown informed them, Nevertheless, the general membership is very interested in Bridgeham's development as a residential area and through their individual activities, particularly those of Richard Waite, the residents have a great many channels of communication with the authorities. As an influential organization, however, the importance of the group has clearly decreased from what it was ten years ago.

I have suggested that although any voluntary association may from time to time become involved in contingency politics, only three organizations in Bridgeham can really be described as para-political bodies, and that one of these is rapidly decreasing in importance. Moreover, although membership is high, the number involved in decision-making activity in all three groups is actually quite low (21 in the Civic Society, with only 3 on the Planning Committee, 4 in the Residents and Tenants Association, and 3 intermittently in the Spitalfields Residents Association); the rest of the membership is only involved in what might be described as an episodic way. It was also the case that officials of all three described the 'watchdog' role as an important aspect of their organizations. Thus, although the voluntary organizations are undoubtedly important in generating public concern for local affairs, serve as outlets for dissatisfaction should the occasion arise and can on occasions exercise considerable influence over decision-making, they are not to any great extent stimulating active public participation. A more significant factor to emerge from the above description perhaps is the high level of Parish Council involvement in these three para-political groups, which implies that the inter-connections between the official and unofficial channels of political action may be important.

6. Public participation

Many writers on public participation have demonstrated that for various reasons people with higher incomes, further education and in professional and managerial occupations (in other words, jobs requiring decision-making abilities) are the most able to achieve political influence, either as individuals or through group organization (see p.58). Clearly, the Bridgeham population as a whole is above average in terms of occupational status, education and income and we might therefore expect that participation through either official or unofficial channels would be both frequent and effective. This, however, was not the case and in the present and the following sections I will try to account for this.

According to the random sample survey of six localities in Cleveland, Bridgeham was not unique in the unpredictably low rates of public participation. Indeed, in general we found that the use made of official channels bore little relation to the socio-economic characteristics of the six areas surveyed. The people of Kirkham and Bridgeham - the two most 'middle-class' populations by occupation, education and income - had not used the public participation machinery any more than had those of Hemlington, a mixed council and private housing estate outside Middlesbrough; and the locality with the greatest number of 'high participators' (defined in terms of submitting views to the planning office, attending public meetings and taking part in local issues) was, in fact, North Ormesby, where the population had the lowest income, education and occupational status levels of any in the sample (see Table 12).

Combining these findings with detailed knowledge of the areas concerned it seems clear that public participation by official means is far more

Table 12. Participation in the Six Localities Surveyed.

Participation	Bridgeham	Kirkham	North Omesby	Henlington	Skelton	Marske	Total
Non Participants	51 (55%)	45 (47%)	53 (60%)	58 (63%)	72 (77%)	61 (67%)	340
Unofficial	33 (36%)	35 (37%)	18 (21%)	23 (25%)	20 (21%)	23 (25%)	152
Official	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	5 (6%)	2 (2%)	0	1 (1%)	12
Combined	4 (4%)	11 (11%)	4 (5%)	3 (3%)	1(1%)	2 (2%)	25
High Participation	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	5 (6%)	1 (1%)	0	1 (1%)	9
Missing Cases	2	2	3	5	1	3	16
Total	93	96	88	92	94	91	554

% = column percentage

unofficial participation - attending public meetings and/or getting involved in a local issue
official participation - reading plans and writing comments
combined participation - activity in both above categories
high participation - all four activities

(Further details of the six localities are given in the Appendix)

directly related to the degree of conflict between planning proposals and local opinion than to the socio-economic composition of populations concerned (see p.268 for a discussion of confrontation in North Ormesby). Over recent years there has been little reason for people in Bridgeham to participate in any sustained way, since planning policy for the area has not been contrary to the majority of local views. The last major conflict with the authorities occurred at the time of local government reorganization when it became clear that Bridgeham was destined to become part of the new county based on Teesside. This certainly produced large-scale participation in unofficial ways, culminating in the 'Keep Bridgeham in Yorkshire' campaign, which involved several public meetings, petitions and other attempts at influencing the location of the new boundary. This activity was rather too far in the past to allow adequate reconstruction and analysis, but from what I could ascertain the main basis seemed to have been an emotional attachment to Yorkshire and an unwillingness to identify with a predominantly industrial administrative area - which must have been difficult to justify in view of the evident social and economic links with Teesside.¹ The campaign failed, as did many similar ones elsewhere at that time.

Also at the time of reorganization there was considerable activity in protest at the huge concomittant increase in the rates. This, too was discussed at several public meetings and petitions were circulated. It also

1. At the time of our survey, admittedly well after this campaign, 78% of respondents said they preferred Yorkshire to Cleveland and 38% of these gave as their first reason the fact that they had 'always been in Yorkshire' or 'liked being in Yorkshire' - and this included many fairly recent in-migrants.

resulted in a large attendance at the Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council. This, however, was scarcely a local issue and the protest had no influence at all.

Since reorganization there has been very little conflict between the authority's plans and local wishes. The main public concerns of the population are the preservation of the old town centre and the provision of adequate school places and since the High Street has now been designated a Conservation Area and the new secondary school building programme brought forward there is, in fact, little source of dispute. The West Cleveland Structure Plan envisaged a huge population growth and the creation of an industrial estate in Bridgeham; some people expressed strong views against this in letters and at public meetings, but the general climate of opinion was that the population forecasts were grossly over-estimated and the planned growth was therefore most unlikely ever to occur.

The suggestion that it is the issues at stake, rather than the social composition of the population, which determine responses is supported by the fact that although 35% of the Bridgeham sample had been to a public meeting over the previous four years - the period of public consultation - only 7% of these meetings had concerned Structure Plans and 14% local plans, whereas 35% and 21% had been about rates and boundary changes respectively. Since the latter two issues have been singled out as having roused considerable public opposition, this demonstrates that there is in Bridgeham a potential for large-scale participation should the need arise.

Although in general public participation in Bridgeham during the discussion of the Structure Plans was low, it is interesting to look in detail at the internal variations. Within Bridgeham itself, I have shown that the

residential areas can be fairly clearly characterised according to their inhabitants' occupational, income and educational levels: however, such differences were not particularly closely reflected by differential rates of public participation.

The degree of knowledge of planning policy for the local area was certainly significantly higher in the residential districts with the highest proportion of professional and managerial inhabitants. 80% of those in the Leven Road area and 54% in the Leven Valley had some knowledge of the plans and 50% of those who had actually seen or read plans lived on the Spitalfields estate. By contrast, 62% of the Willey Flatts respondents (council tenants) had never heard of the plans in even a general way. With regard to the West Cleveland Structure Plan (the most recent overall plan concerning Bridgeham), although only 15% of the sample had any knowledge of this, Willey Flatts was the only district where no-one at all had heard of it, whilst 36% of those who had lived on Spitalfields. These are rather crude indicators, but they do imply a marked difference in the knowledge of planning affairs between the residential areas which is positively correlated with their socio-economic composition. In consideration of the complex nature of the plans, the format used and the technical terminology, such differences are to be expected. It is also the case that many of the public displays of the plans and their implications were held in Stockton and Middlesbrough, where we have seen that the professional and managerial people are more likely to travel to work than are the unskilled and manual workers.

When we examine participatory activity, as opposed to knowledge, however, the significance of the residential areas disappears completely. For example, of those who had taken part in a local issue, exactly the same number (35% of

the total) lived on the Spitalfields and Tarmac estates. No-one on Willey Flatts had been active in this way, but neither had anyone on the Spital, and the area where the highest percentage of respondents had taken part in an issue was the Tarmac (46%). Similarly, attendance at public meetings was not determined by residential area: attendance was lowest on Willey Flatts (12%), but The Spital came next lowest (20%); it was high on Leven Valley (45%) and Leven Road (40%), but it was also high on the Tarmac, (38%).

I have no statistics on the socio-economic characteristics of those who attended a meeting in 1975, called by the planning office to discuss a proposed by-pass for Bridgeham, but I did ascertain the identity of all those who spoke and these proved to be a complete cross-section with regard to occupation and length of residence. It was also clear that neither lack of understanding of technical terminology nor lack of experience in public speaking deterred people from stating their views.

As far as Bridgeham is concerned, the only category of participants who were at all homogeneous in socio-economic terms were those who had written letters to the planning office or filled in 'comment forms' at public meetings, specifically in response to the contents of the Structure Plans. The planning office published a summary of these responses, 12 of which were from Bridgeham. All these commentators were house- and car-owners and 11 were in professional or managerial occupations (significantly, five were also Parish Councillors). The fact that three of these educated and articulate people felt the plans were difficult to understand largely explains the bias of the group. Objections to the proposed industrial estate and route of a suggested by-pass were predominant, four of these being prompted by a threat to the commentator's property. Only two made any comment on overall structural implications; another two had particular interests outside Bridgeham, but these were both in places of work. The local interests revolved mainly

round conservation of the town and surrounding countryside. This suggests that even where people do take advantage of official channels their interests are still predominantly personal, or at most community-oriented; there is little interest in large-scale policy matters. Since most of the public consultation process is aimed at discussion of the Structure Plans (the local implications being left to a later stage) this is another explanation for the generally low participation in the official procedures.

The final stage of public participation is the Examination in Public (before a panel appointed by the Department of the Environment) of the Structure Plans, to which particular objectors are invited to make representations. At this level only structural implications are allowed to be discussed and the low public attendance at the examination in public of the Cleveland Structure Plans, in June, 1975, was particularly marked (not more than half a dozen, which is hardly surprising since the Examination was held mid-week in Thornaby). The only person from Bridgeham who was involved at all in this was the chairman of the Civic Society, who was actually there as a second spokesman for the Teesside Civic Trust.

Clearly, then, as other investigations have shown (e.g. Simmie, op. cit.), when a single locality is examined in detail public participation is found to be a far more complex phenomenon than can be explained simply by reference to gross socio-economic variables. The council estate does indeed score low on both knowledge of local planning and participation; but participation was also low on The Spital, whilst the Tarmac residents were fairly high participators. Thus, although people of higher occupational status may have the requisite knowledge for utilising official channels, this fact alone does not determine their propensity to participate, nor does lack of technical knowledge prevent others from making use of the channels. Furthermore, unlike Simmie's data from Oxfordshire, the evidence from Bridgeham did not suggest

that any other social variables - such as density of the local network or length of residence - were correlated to any significant extent with different levels of participation.

I have shown that local involvement in Bridgeham and concern for the future of the town are fairly marked characteristics of the population, but that public participation is low and not determined by socio-economic differentials. The low level of participation may be largely explained by the current absence of contentious issues between the planners and the public in Bridgeham and I have demonstrated that, when strong feelings are aroused, the population will indeed organise protests which demand the attention of the authorities, even though the instances of this in recent years have been unsuccessful in outcome. But a degree of participation was evident at the time of Structure Plan consultation and at different times individuals and groups have become involved in other ways. Since it is not sufficient to accept that the propensity to participate is randomly distributed, I will now spend some time examining the possibility that people's responses to planning, and to bureaucracy in general, may derive from their experiences of it which create quite different perceptions of and attitudes towards the whole participation process.

7. Perceptions of the system

Before people will participate they must perceive that they are able to do so effectively and believe that they will not be merely wasting their time and increasing their frustration with the system; that is, they must believe in their own political efficacy. No direct questions on perception were asked during this study, yet it emerged that people in Bridgeham held very different views about the machinery of local government and the new

public participation procedures and it seems that perception may be an important determinant of participation.

At the level of least understanding of the system, bureaucracy is perceived as a single, undifferentiated body: the whole hierarchy of local government councillors and officers, from the County Council to the rent collector, are referred to simply as 'them'. This generic term seems to summarise two dominant conceptualisations of bureaucracy: firstly, its external nature and separation from 'us', the familiar group, and secondly, the idea that the officers and councillors are a united body in opposition to the local community. This is what psychologists call 'categorical imagery' (Warr and Knapper, 1968, p.7). An example will clarify the use made of such perceptions. Some years ago a group of local people drew up plans for a social club near the council estate in Bridgeham. The Rural District Council agreed to the site, the North Riding granted planning permission and a brewery was found to finance the club. Then, according to local accounts, the R.D.C. suddenly trebled the price of the land, the brewery backed out and the site was sold to a private builder for houses. Although four bodies (the County Council, R.D.C., brewery and building company) were involved in these manoeuvres, the whole affair is summed up locally as "we were going to have a social club once, but they stopped it."

The administration is seen as obstructive of local views in another sense, too. It not only prevents desired developments, as in the case above, but it is also felt to instigate changes where people want things to stay as they are. This gives rise to statements such as "Why don't they just leave Bridgeham alone?" and "They will develop whether we like it or not." Thus, bureaucracy is seen as external, faceless and united in opposition to the wishes of local people.

Such imagery is the result of stereotyping, which Vinacke defines as "The tendency to attribute generalised and simplified characteristics to groups of people in the form of verbal labels" (Vinacke, 1974, p. 480). The fact that perceptions are based on stereotyping and generalisation from superficial knowledge emerged particularly clearly from questions to do with local government ^{re} organization. Some quotations followed by factual comments will illustrate this point.

- "There are too many amateurs in local government for running a big business like Cleveland" (in fact, untrained, unpaid councillors have always been the foundation of English local government and the North Riding was certainly no different in this respect.)

- "Planners don't care because they're not local people" (in 1975 a County and District planner lived in Bridgeham, none of the former authority's planners did so).

- "We got on better with Stokesly than these people" / "Reorganization has been a change for the worse in communication with the authorities" / "We don't know who to go to now" (Stokesly is considerably farther from Bridgeham than Stockton is and many people work and go shopping in Stockton, where the Town Hall is very central).

It seems that such comments primarily reflect the difficulties of reorganization per se - people have not yet found their way round the new system - and the attitudes are based on a comparison between an old and familiar system and a new one still in the process of establishing its identity. This suggestion is supported by the more evident confusion in phrases used by two survey respondents: "Cleveland District Council" and "The County Council . . . is that Cleveland?"

These kinds of perception, then, are based on insufficient information and on misunderstanding, which are always present to some degree, but have recently been exacerbated by the administrative upheavals. It is evident from the data that such generalised conceptualisations of bureaucracy are most frequently unfavourable; and people with the perceptions outlined above are unlikely to participate effectively in a public consultation programme, either because they are not sufficiently familiar with the structure to adopt the best strategy, or because their view of the system leads them to doubt that their participation will have any effect on the decision makers.

Turning to the participation process itself, several of the respondents made comments which suggested their attitudes towards the consultation procedure. There are three categories of people involved here: eight Parish Councillors, eleven people who wrote letters to the planning office or commented in writing after public meetings and 33 individuals from the random sample survey whose spontaneous comments indicated their perceptions of the system. 16 people commented that public participation was 'good'; these were eight Parish Councillors and eight letter-writers (one councillor and three letter-writers qualified this in some way, but were generally in favour). 14 thought the process was 'bad': 11 survey respondents and three letter-writers. And on the public meeting as part of this process, 12 were in favour: eight Parish Councillors and four letter-writers; whilst 15 were against it: 10 survey respondents and five letter-writers (the main reason being that the planners were felt to have everything 'cut and dried before the meeting'; 'fait accompli' was another commonly used phrase in this context). Thus, the totals are fairly evenly divided as to the benefits of the participation process. However, the breakdown is interesting: the Parish Council came down unanimously in favour, the letter-writers were split almost evenly, and the survey respondents were

wholly against the participation process. From this I would argue that there is a close relationship between the perceptions of the process and the respondents' participation in it. The Parish Councillors were automatically involved in planning procedures, the letter-writers by definition had participated to some extent (though for some the single letter represented the limit of their involvement), and the survey respondents had in general only minimal experience of participation,

This relationship between attitudes and experience of participation seems to be based on what Warr and Knapper call 'stored stimulus person information', which they describe as

"information about the stimulus person which is within the perceiver's memory, being available as the basis of a conceptual judgement. Stored information about what a person has done on other occasions, about what other people have said about him" (Warr and Knapper, op. cit. p.18).

Such stored information is used to predict the future behaviour of the stimulus person and this seems to be particularly relevant as far as planners are concerned. As suggested above, planning is often seen as something which an external authority imposes on the local population and from past experience it is associated with development and change. As one speaker at a public meeting put it: "Bridgeham people are frightened of planning because they are frightened of development", whilst another called for "Natural growth, not plans". This is a basic misconception which persists even among those who go so far as to attend public meetings and write letters. In actual fact, Bridgeham is now designated a Conservation Area by the planning office. This too is an imposition from outside and not all agree with it; yet the general perception of planning is of development and rarely of its other aspects - conservation and restrictions on change. All the Parish Councillors are keen on preservation and to have made Bridgeham a Conservation Area has been a major point in favour of the present planning office

as far as they are concerned. To them, the North Riding failed because it would not produce a plan for Bridgeham which restricted modernization and development, whereas the new Stockton District made this one of its first moves. 'Natural growth' has led to the loss of many old buildings which the woman who called for it at the public meeting herself regretted. The Parish Council, however, realise that preservation must be controlled by a plan as much as renewal. Responsibility for this misconception lies wholly with the planners; if they wish to improve their public image in a place such as Bridgeham they must understand the strength of the stored information and verbal labelling which associate planning with development and seek instead to emphasise their function as conservationists. The Parish Council have had dealings with the North Riding and with Stockton and realise how much more the latter value old Bridgeham than did the former. It is interesting to note in this context that the only local councillor who preferred the old North Riding was one of the District Councillors, who did not rank conservation as a high priority. Indeed, he sold his Georgian house on the High Street to a supermarket chain and considered himself lucky to have "got in in time" - that is, before such developments were prohibited.

The fact that the planning process is now being made more public also means that a lot of resentment produced by the stored information from past experience is being thrust on the new authority by a public which feels it must defend its environment against further planning. A poster displayed around the town at the time of the public meeting had the headline 'God and Heaven save us from the Planners'. The North Riding produced no overall plan for Bridgeham and in consequence, gradually and intermittently, several old buildings were lost. But the protests were spread over many years and the authorities therefore avoided any public confrontation, Because the new

laws require official consultation, Stockton sought to present its plans at a public meeting and as a result was accused of trying to devastate the town.

The data suggest that the creation of a favourable image of planners as a body depends more than anything else on direct contact with members of the public. In general it is those who have had personal dealings with planners who have the most favourable image of the new authority and its machinery. Such people are not necessarily councillors, nor need the outcome be successful from the individual's point of view, as the following case shows. A housewife who got up a petition against further development on her estate had to fight for her right to be heard at every step and in the end was able to get only very minor alterations in the plans. Yet she had a very favourable impression of the authority because the process had allowed her to become involved: she put her opinion to one planner in his office and she was later invited to a site meeting with planners and councillors. She thought the planners were "genuinely interested and sympathetic" and she "felt she had been consulted", despite the fact that it was her view that "you have to be alert and insist or you'll be ignored." She was also quite prepared to get involved in a similar way in the future, should the need arise. Two of the letter-writers made the same point of "at least being consulted" when talking about public meetings. This suggests that a very superficial appearance of interest and concern on the part of the planners improves their public image vastly. There are also two important analytical points to be made from this case: firstly, the influence of episodic judgments on perception and secondly, the impact of direct as opposed to indirect perception.

For most people, their experience of dealing with planners is extremely narrow and their attitudes are likely to be based on limited information. Warr and Knapper, in a discussion of the 'expectancy component' of perception, which allows behaviour to be predicted, distinguish between 'episodic' and 'dispositional' judgements. Episodic judgements are made at the present time on current information, whereas dispositional ones are more permanent attitudes based on past experience and stored information. They suggest that

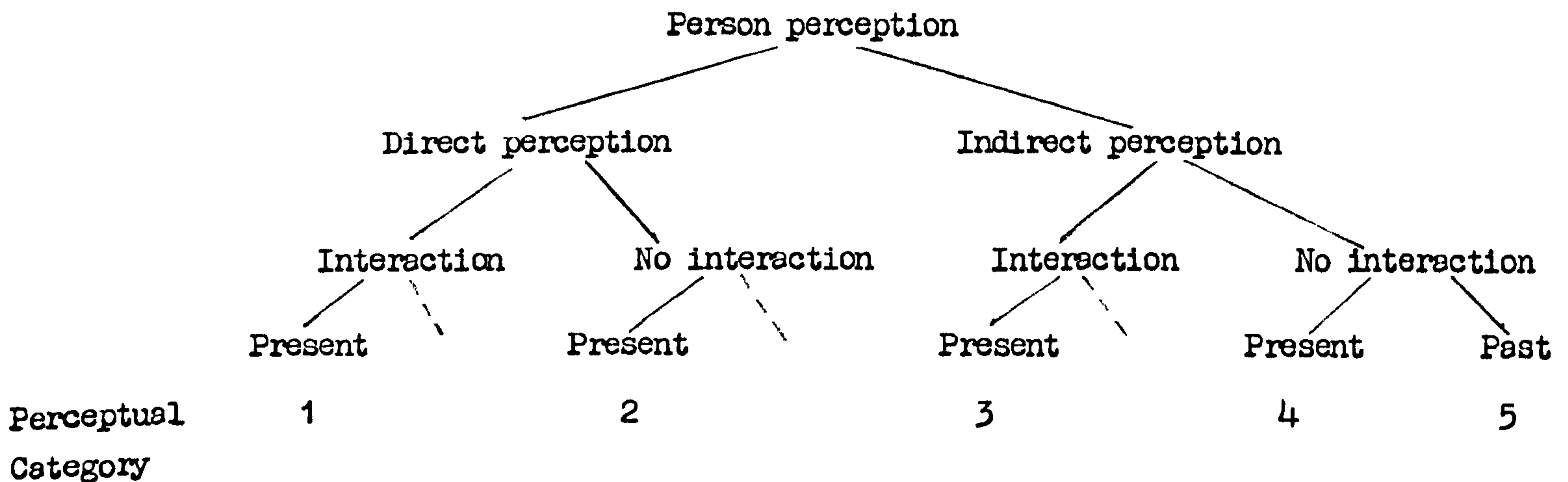
"Perceivers are extremely willing . . . to translate an episodic judgement into a dispositional one which relates also to other occasions. On the basis of limited information about what a person does in one situation we are prone to attribute to him dispositional characteristics which he is supposed to possess in an almost unrestricted range of situations"

(Warr and Knapper, op. cit. p.15).

Clearly, episodic judgements are being used in the public's perception of planning. In the case of the woman above, one episodic judgement had created a favourable dispositional judgement; she had been heard by the authorities on one occasion and this led her to expect that the official reaction would be the same next time. Conversely, an individual involved in an unfavourable episode is likely to expect that any future encounters will follow the same lines.

Secondly, this case demonstrates the important division between direct and indirect perception in attitude-formation. Direct perception is based on personal contact, whereas indirect perception derives from the intervention of an intermediary - either the media or another individual - and the information on which perception is based is therefore subject to selection and processing by the intermediary concerned. Warr and Knapper provide a useful diagram to express these different types of perception:

Figure 5. Types of perceptual situations in terms of three characteristics



(Warr and Knapper, op. cit. p.30)

Some of the examples they give of perception in these categories are as follows:

1. Conversations, interviews
2. Lectures, ceremonial events
3. Telephone conversations
4. Live television broadcasts
5. Recorded television or radio broadcasts, newspaper reports, verbal accounts.

The relevance of this diagram to the present material is that perception of planners falls into exactly these categories. Given that episodic judgements are translated into dispositional judgements, then attitudes can be seen to be formed on the basis of the perceptual incident which had most impact, or which was most frequently repeated. Those who have had direct dealings with planners, such as the Parish Councillors or the woman in the case cited above, base their judgements on perceptions in Category 1. These derive from personal interaction and the attitudes were formed at the time of such encounters. Those who spoke at public meetings and got an answer

fall into the same category, but those who merely listened derive their images from Category 2, in which there was no interaction involved. Some people have telephoned the planning office and are therefore included in the third perceptual category; others, in Category 4, will have seen live T.V. broadcasts or heard planners speak on the radio. But by far the largest perceptual category as far as planning is concerned is the last one. Perception in Category 5 is indirect, involves no interaction and is based on past events. The intervention of an intermediary is at its most influential here, whether it be the press, or other people recounting incidents related to planning. At this level, the information on which judgement is based is the most open to distortion and selection of any which reaches the individual. It is also apparently the most likely to produce an unfavourable attitude.

Thus, it can be seen that individuals place more trust in direct, interpersonal relations than in the formalised interaction of larger groups and official channels, even among a population with the resources and experience to deal with bureaucracy on its own terms. Once people are dealing with others as individuals, rather than bureaucratic bodies, their belief in their own ability to influence decisions is greatly increased. From the material I have presented here it seems that underneath the diagram an arrow from left to right could be added to represent a favourable/unfavourable continuum in the attitudes manifested towards the planning authorities. In other words, I suggest that there is a positive correlation between perception which is direct and based on interaction and a favourable attitude towards the planning process.

The source of the image bears no relation to its potency as a model for action. The majority of Bridgeham people have had no personal dealings with planners, yet they hold a firm image of them as a body, based on what they read in the papers or hear from others. New information is interpreted in the light of the perception already held and usually serves to reinforce

it. Reorganization was an opportunity for the local government hierarchy to present a completely new image and, as seen above, this was successful with the best-informed, the Parish Councillors. One of the key variables in successful public participation is the quality of communication between the authorities and the public in both directions. The new District authority for Bridgeham took pains to present itself favourably to the Parish Council, through official meetings and personal contact, and the councillors accepted it as a great improvement. Other individuals who have had such contact may have had to fight for the right to be heard, but generally emerge with a favourable attitude. Those for whom the planning authority and the public participation process have an adverse image seem to be the majority, who have had no personal dealings with officials, having only read reports and possibly attended public meetings.

There is, of course, a whole area of perception which has not been touched upon here, namely, the planners' image of the public. Because those who write letters or speak at public meetings are generally critical, planners, I would suggest, see the population in an equally stereotyped way as a homogeneous, hostile body. Given this attitude the planners naturally adopt a defensive stance and so the lack of communication is reinforced.

8. Indicators of the local importance of the Parish Council

The latter part of this chapter has comprised three sections: an examination of the political influence of voluntary groups; an account of public participation in Bridgeham, looking both at knowledge of local planning matters and at responses to these, and finally, the argument that the attitudes and perceptions which are a prerequisite to participation are formed largely on the basis of interpersonal relations and direct contact with officials. From the material presented, it has emerged that despite the fact that the local population has the socio-economic characteristics

most authors have associated with high levels of participation, political activity in Bridgeham is low; although it must be stated that the potential for action may be greater than appeared in 1975, due to the current lack of contentious local planning issues . Most importantly, however, it appears that political activity of all kinds in Bridgeham is very much influenced by the Parish Council.

The three voluntary groups which have persisted as part of the political infrastructure are all dominated by Parish Council involvement, the number of other people who are active in them being very small. All three depend on councillors for information and as channels of influence with higher authorities. Public participation through official channels was in general found to be low, yet five of the 11 people who submitted written comments to the planning office were Parish Councillors. Finally, the discussion of perception demonstrated that, because of the approach taken by the new District Authority, the Parish Councillors have had a great deal of personal contact with the planning officials and have developed a favourable attitude towards them. They therefore know and are prepared to use the available communication channels more than any other sector of the population and have a high sense of their own political efficacy,

The rest of the study focusses very directly on the Parish Council as the chief source of political activity in Bridgeham. There are other grounds for this than the factors mentioned above. In an anthropological study of local political activity I naturally wished to avoid making unfounded assumptions about the importance of the local government hierarchy and expected that interpersonal relations and informal activity would prove equally important. However, several indicators pointed to the key role of the council. In my initial interviews with those who had written comments on the plans, the Civic Society and Parish Council were both mentioned as the

bodies with most local influence. Since most of these commentators were members of at least one of these groups, this was not unexpected; but the survey respondents, who were a random sample, ranked the Parish Council even more highly. When asked how they would make their views known in local affairs, 41% of respondents said they would do it by a personal approach, and to the question to whom they would express their views, 34% said the Parish Council or a Parish Councillor, with the press a poor second at 15%, the District Council or a District Councillor 6%, M.P. 5%, County Council 3% and County Councillor not mentioned by any.

This response signifies two factors: firstly, it reiterates the reliance on personal relationships as a means of exerting influence and secondly, it demonstrates an apparent faith in the representative system at the most local level. 53% of respondents knew at least one Parish Councillor; for so small a population this is not perhaps a very high figure, but it was certainly considerably higher than the knowledge of councillors at other levels - 42% knew a District Councillor, whilst only 20% of the sample knew a County Councillor, and in both these cases several of those named did not represent Bridgeham. Unlike Glossop and Barking, described above (see p.31), there is in Bridgeham no lack of interest in or knowledge of local council affairs and the familiar body, whose members can be approached personally is seen as the best means of influence.

Despite the fact that the Parish Council as a body is part of the established hierarchy of local government, therefore, its activity will be analysed very much in terms of interpersonal relationships in order to see how an official body can maintain the close personal contact which local people obviously feel is a prerequisite to political influence. I will examine how the different levels of authority are articulated and how

the conflicting demands of the local population are resolved by a body with a wide range of interests and commitments. By this approach we will see whether the Parish Council is in fact, as the population evidently believes, both open to local opinions and influential with higher authorities.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARISH COUNCIL IN THE LOCAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

In Chapter I we saw that recent observers have documented the decline in effectiveness of the representative in local government. Elected councils were not found to reflect the socio-economic composition of their constituency populations or to stimulate local interest and involvement in public affairs. The official system was increasingly being by-passed by those wishing to express their views and there was a growing demand for more direct public participation. Two major changes in the system of local government attempted to remedy this, but had only partial success. The provision of channels for public consultation in planning has not proved a very democratic process and reorganization in the end did not reduce the confusion of local authorities, whilst the lack of attention paid to Maud's 'local councils' served to increase the remoteness of decision making.

In Chapter III, I argued that although the Bridgeham population has the characteristics which other observers have found to favour effective public participation, little use is made of these official channels. There is a degree of unofficial activity in the form of protests and some para-political groups exercise political influence. From an examination of both activities and attitudes, however, it clearly emerged that the Parish Council is both an active body in local politics and, importantly, is perceived as such by the Bridgeham population.

That a Parish Council should be thought to be the main source of local influence is anomalous both in terms of its structural position - an 'optional extra' at the bottom of the local government hierarchy - and in terms of the apparent rejection of the representative system documented in the literature.

In the next two chapters I focus on the Parish Council in detail, examining both its structural position and interactional characteristics in order to see whether it has indeed the political power attributed to it by the local population and, if so, how this is achieved and exercised.

In the present chapter the emphasis is mainly on structural concerns and the Parish Council is presented as a corporate group. I look first at the position of the council in the local government hierarchy in terms of Adams notion of 'power domains' and then examine the source of power through a distinction between legitimacy and competence. In both these sections the status of the Parish Council as a mediator between the public and higher authorities is emphasised. I then move on to the internal organization of the council by examining its composition, its approach to public affairs and its mode of operation. This forms the basis for an analysis of interpersonal relations which occupies Chapter V.

1. The inter-relations of power: location of the Parish Council in the local government system

Bridgeham, together with the rural areas to the south, has one County Councillor and two District Councillors. The Parish Council is the lowest level of elected representation and serves the parish only. There are nine members of the Parish Council and elections are held every three years. In 1973 there was no election as the nine candidates were returned unopposed. This was, however, very unusual and in examining the post-war records I found no other occasion on which an election had not been necessary. Several people suggested that in 1973 the affairs of the Parish Council were eclipsed in local importance by the upheavals caused by reorganization and the removal of Bridgeham from North Yorkshire. Since there was competition for seats

again in 1976, this would seem to be a sufficient explanation. Furthermore, when there was a vacancy due to a death in 1974 there were 14 applications from people wishing to join the council.

The Parish Council controls its own land and property, which in Bridgeham consists chiefly of the Town Hall, cemetery and allotments. It has a small income from the rates and also an annual sum from the tolls levied at the Fair. Money is spent on maintaining its assets and giving financial assistance to local improvement projects. The Parish Council, then, has few formal powers; in other words, it has only a minimum of ascribed rights and duties concerning matters which affect its electorate, and those rights which it does possess tend to operate only in areas of minor public concern, such as the upkeep of public property and the redistribution of a minimal income. Since local government reorganization it has been given an official role as an advisory body, for example on planning applications, but because of its restricted powers the main official function of the Parish Council today is quite definitely as a link, a recognised channel of communication, between its electors and higher authorities and as such it has potential, rather than statutory influence in local politics. Despite this it is important to analyse the position of the Parish Council in terms of the inter-relations of power.

Adams suggests that

"Power . . . is a social relationship that rests on the basis of some pattern of controls and is reciprocal. That is, both members of the relationship act in terms of their own self-interest and, specifically, do so in terms of the controls that each has over matters of interest to the other"

(Adams, 1975, p.22).

This approach is relevant to the power of the Parish Council in two ways; firstly, its relationship with its public, and secondly, its relationship

with higher authorities. The reciprocity of the relationship between the council and the public lies in the fact that the people of the parish elect the council and therefore control its composition. The council, for its part controls a few matters of material concern to its electorate and one of many official channels for communication with higher levels of local government. Between the Parish Council and the superior authorities - the County and District Councils - reciprocity lies in the fact that the Parish Council is the source of local-level knowledge and opinion (and votes) upon which the success of the policies of these higher authorities depends. The District and County authorities, on the other hand, control the environment of the Parish Council in a much more obvious and direct way in that they can override local objections and also operate in direct relation with the public, without the intervention of the Parish Council. Adams recognises that the reciprocity in the relations of power need not imply equality of power:

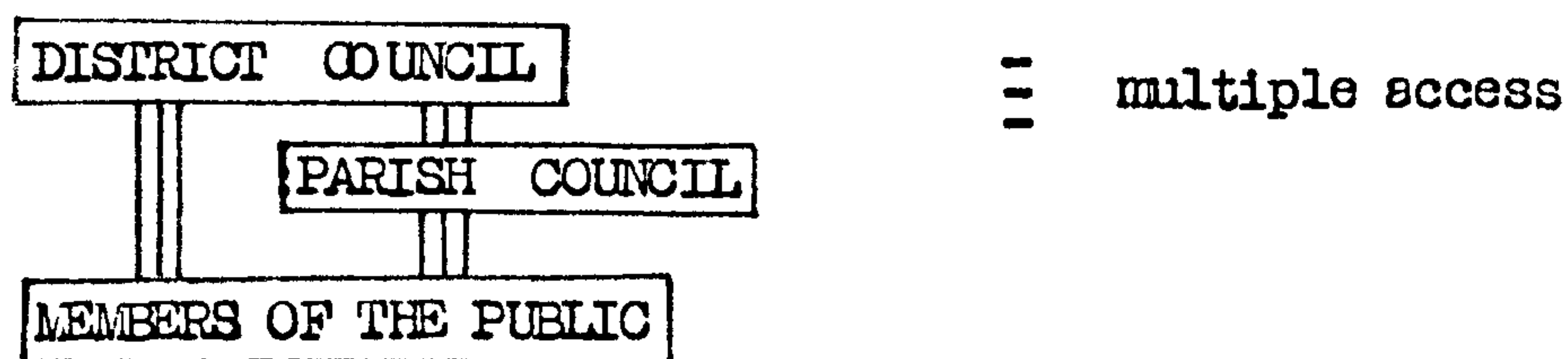
"To insist that power relations are reciprocal is not to say that they are equal, balanced, or equivalent. Quite the contrary, it is precisely in those cases where the power is unequal that the power aspect of the relation may most easily be seen to operate. It is important, however, to recognise that there are always at least two sides to a power relation and that, in the context of the relation, decisions will be made by all parties"

(ibid., p.27).

This is similar to the transactional view of power advocated by Blau (1964), but Adams goes on to suggest that where there is unequal power in a relationship then one "operating unit" may be said to be "within the domain of" the other (ibid., p.68), and this is a useful analytical concept. Adams differentiates "unitary" and "multiple" domains. The former obtain where the subordinate has only a single line of access to the superordinate, whilst in the latter there exist multiple means of access.

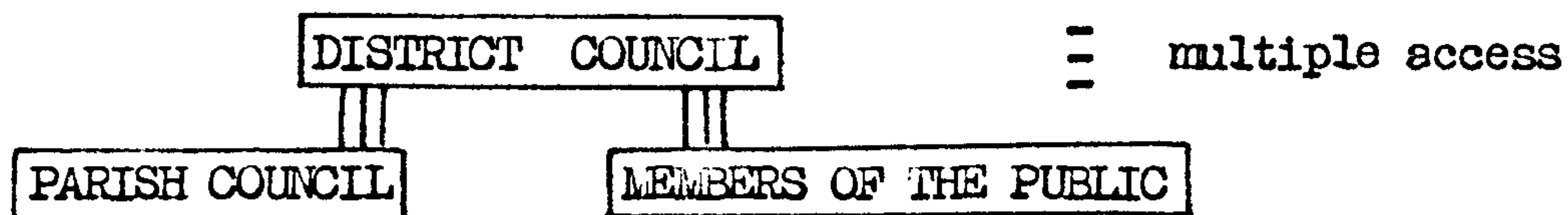
The Parish Council in most situations is within the domain of the District Council. This is a multiple domain, since there are several different channels by which the Parish Council may approach the District Council: through the councillors, the officers or the committees. Similarly, the public is within the domain of the Parish Council and its channels of access there are as numerous as the members of the council. What is important here is that the public is also directly within the domain of the District Council, as it has its own representatives there; not all the controls exercised by the District Council require the mediation of the Parish Council. This may be expressed diagrammatically as follows:

Figure 6. Local Government Power Domains, 1.



Thus, in the case of planning applications, for example, the District Council communicates with the Parish Council, which in turn communicates with the public; there is the possibility, however, of the public by-passing the Parish Council and making direct representations to the District Council. The Parish Council can play the role of mediator, but the official channels of communication are such that this intermediary body is not necessarily required. And with regard to many of the powers exercised by the District Council - education, housing etc. - a truer representation of the situation would be achieved by placing the Parish Council and the public parallel with each other; both being within the domain of the District Council and having multiple access to it:

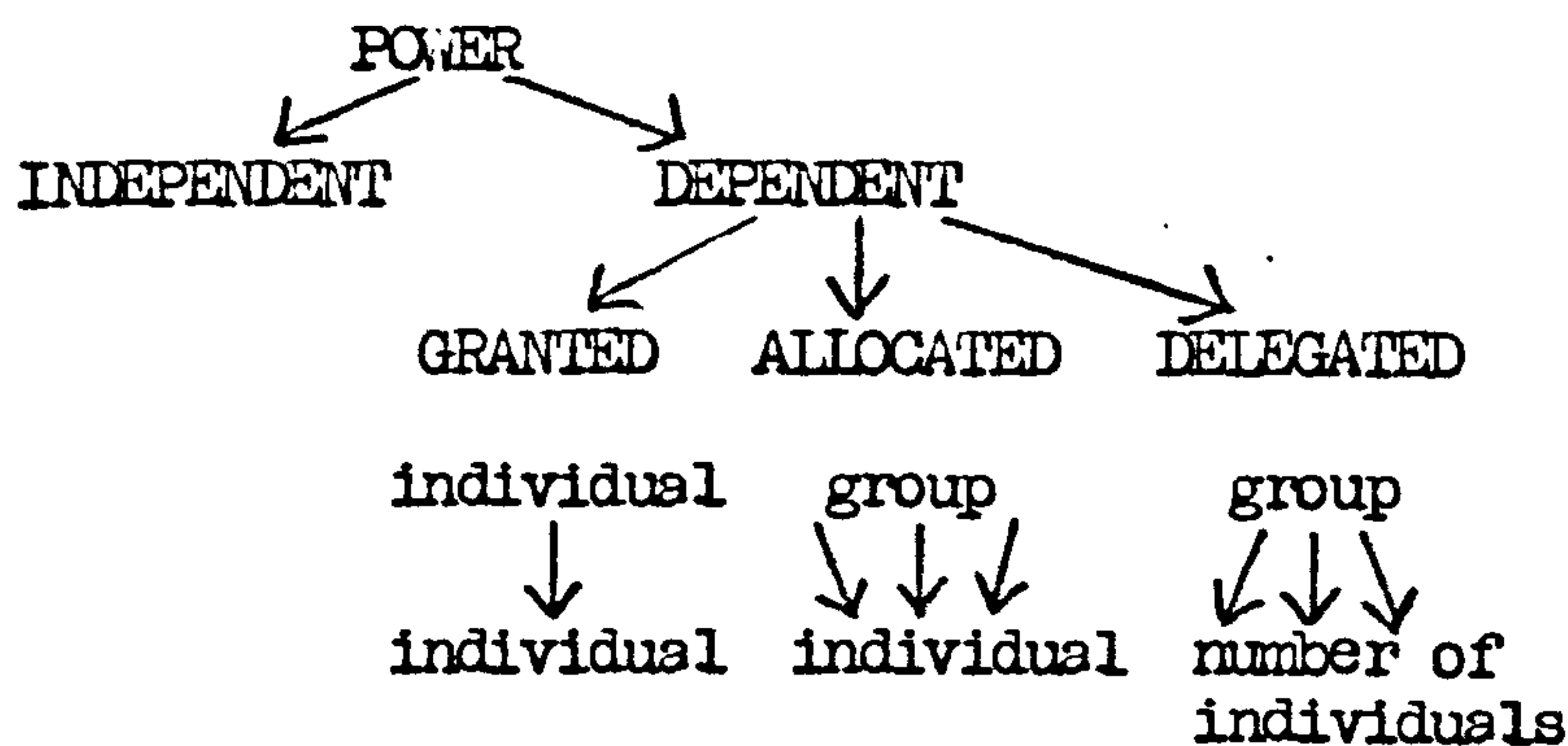
Figure 7. Local Government Power Domains, 2.



Thus, not only is the Parish Council an 'optional extra' in the structure of local government, but its power domain is extremely limited and only circumscribes the local population in issues of minor public concern. The domain of the District Council, by contrast, embraces both the Parish Council and the local public and it is not always necessary to use the mediation of the former to reach the latter.

In examining different types of power relations, however, Adams focuses on the source as the distinguishing feature. The clearest way to summarise this aspect of power is to construct a diagram from Adams' categories:

Figure 8. Adams' Types of Power according to their Source.



Independent power, according to Adams, derives from the direct controls exercised by an individual or group. Power is dependent when one controller "lends" another the right to make a decision for him. Such "lending" of power takes three forms, distinguished by the individuals and groups involved, as shown in the diagram. It is important to note that "In granting, allocating

and delegating, the controller does not give up his controls, and he may, therefore, withdraw the decision-making rights at any time" (Adams, 1977, p.388). The election of representatives may be seen as a means of delegating power: the public gives decision-making rights to local councillors. Although these rights may be withdrawn only at elections and not "at any time", it is important to realise that the power of councils and of individual councillors is not independent but dependent, being based on the electoral support of the public.

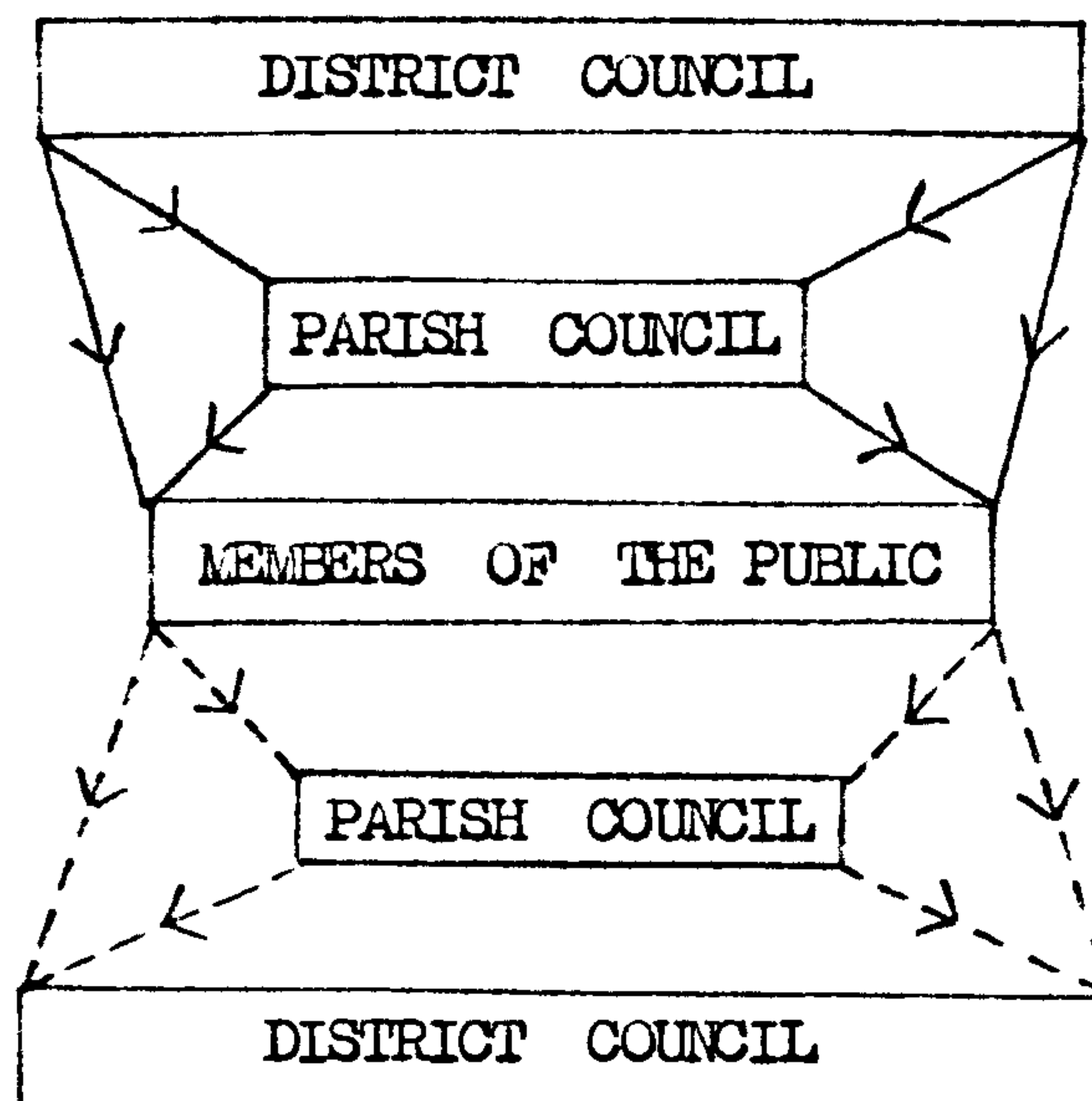
This would appear to reverse the hierarchy set out above, in which the public were envisaged as being within the domains of the local elected bodies. This apparent contradiction of the two hierarchies was also found by Bax in dealing with a similar set of power relations between elected leaders, their sources of political control and the electorate. These latter he calls "prize producers" and "prize consumers", and the problem is that "each element in the (political) machine both produces and consumes prizes" (Bax, 1976 p.71). Bax's solution is to abandon the usual conceptualization of power relations:

"The political machine is frequently described as a pyramid with the big bosses at the top and the smaller ones below them, whereas I preferred the hour-glass form. This is no mere playing with metaphors. For several reasons the hour-glass model provides a better picture of the machine. Firstly, it emphasizes the actual dependency of the leaders upon prize producers and presents these as an (analytically) separate category. Secondly, it contains no notion of a hierarchically organized system. Indeed, why should leaders occupy a more important position than the prize producers or the consumers, and which criterion should be used"

(ibid., p.86).

Thus, it may be productive to combine Adams' notions of power domains and the sources of power into a single diagrammatic form, that of the 'hour-glass'.

Figure 9. Direction of power flow through domains and delegation



→ = control through domains
- - - - -> = delegation of dependent power

By avoiding the location of any of the three operating units involved at the top of a hierarchical diagram (either the District Council as having the most embracing domain, or the public as having the greatest power of delegation), the interplay of the power base and the actual exercise of control is more clearly expressed and the two kinds of power can be seen to flow different ways. But the most striking factor highlighted by this dualistic view is the position of the Parish Council. Whether we examine the structure of power domains or the electoral delegation of decision-making power, the Parish Council is in each case both in an intermediary position yet open to circumvention by the direct lines linking the members of the public and the District Council.

Because the Parish Council is in this ambivalent structural position in the local power system I would argue that the way a particular council operates its role may be crucial to its ability to influence decisions. This is what I wish to explore for the case of Bridgeham.

2. Legitimacy and competence

In this context I draw a distinction between legitimacy and competence. This too is a question of the source of power of an operating unit, but in this case it is primarily the public recognition of the source which is important.

Adams differentiates legitimacy and authority: "Legitimacy refers to an agreement about the correctness of anything", whereas "Authority applies to an individual or operating unit that has power, control, or skill, or, by metaphorical extension, to the means by which or the associated context within which this power or control is exercised" (Adams, 1975, p.36). I prefer to use competence, rather than authority, in order that the means and contexts inevitably associated with the exercise of authority do not have to be included. I am therefore limiting my definitions to the recognised bases of power and for the sake of clarity excluding the mode of its use. Having said this, the definitions I use are close to those of Adams: legitimacy I take to be the recognised, legally-based right to operate in a certain way, whilst competence is based on proven ability and manifest skill to do so. Legitimacy is therefore ascribed, whereas competence is achieved; the former comprises rights and duties and derives from the external environment, whilst the latter involves acknowledged abilities and results from the operating unit's own activities. What is important here is that both legitimacy and competence may be seen as the basis for the exercise of power and either may exist without the other.

Using Easton's definition of politics as the formulation and execution of binding decisions it must be clear that in Britain today most political decisions are made outside the local community, in Westminster and Whitehall. Local government, at County and District level, has considerable powers in both policy-formulation and executive authority; parish councils, however, have very little formal power. The paucity of power at this level is exemplified by the fact that not all areas which could have a parish council take up this opportunity. Such councils have, nevertheless, a basis of legitimacy which makes them part of local government structure. They are elected bodies and the time of elections, number of seats and basic mode of operation are laid down by national legislation. They have their own budget and a small sphere of unique responsibilities in their local area, such as the upkeep of parish property, over which they have both decision-making and executive powers. But beyond this the legitimate rights and duties of a parish council are extremely restricted. The higher authorities must seek the views of the parish council on certain matters concerning their local area, but, as with public consultation in planning, there is no obligation to incorporate advice received into policy.

In looking at the development of town committees in Western Ghana Robertson makes some useful comments on legitimacy and competence and their inter-relations. He sees the two as being closely interdependent and suggests that changes in one will affect the other. It is also important, Robertson says, to realise that the authority to make decisions can be conferred (Adams would say allocated or delegated) either 'from below' or 'from above'; it is therefore crucial to examine the system of inter-relationships both with the encapsulating authority and with the local population. Furthermore, competence may be seen as the more important aspect of authoritative decision making, since it implies a practical ability which may operate in several ways:

"To persist, a decision-making body must have recognised rights and duties, and there must be issues over which it has accepted competence. It may be useful to distinguish internal and external competence: on the one hand the committee is concerned with issues raised by community members and with making and executing decisions on their behalf; on the other hand it makes and transmits community decisions to other, external, authorities, and reciprocally passes on instructions from outside to the people"

(Robertson, 1971, p.132).

The decision-making powers of a parish council, I would suggest, derive mainly not from its legitimacy, for its statutory rights and duties are minimal, but from its ability to exploit the interstitial role to the full, in other words, to establish its competence. Internal competence can be important and requires that the parish council takes account of public opinion, but in general this concerns only minor issues. It is external competence which gives the parish council the ability to influence decisions made elsewhere and this must be recognised by both the local population and the external authority. This means mediating between the community and the encapsulating authority to the advantage of the former, but without antagonising the latter. Successful operation over a period of time will lead to public recognition of the council's competence in certain spheres. Whether or not the public accepts the council's competence will be demonstrated at election times when the legitimacy of that particular council's activities may be renewed or terminated.

Legitimacy remains an important factor, however, for although the duties of the parish council are so restricted its rights are considerably broader than those of a voluntary association because of the electoral base. Voluntary organizations have no legitimacy beyond that ascribed by their own membership because only members can vote on leadership and policy matters. Even where membership is open to all residents and polls in parish council elections are low, the legitimacy of a voluntary organization

is less than that of a council because of the exclusivity of membership. Voluntary organizations may have considerable and recognised competence, (as we have seen to be the case for Bridgeham Civic Society), but this is usually limited to particular matters, rather than the wide range of issues which a parish council may be competent to deal with.

In observing that legitimacy and competence are inter-related, Robertson implies a positive correlation between the two: that an increase in legitimacy will give rise to increased competence. In the case of parish councils, however, I would argue that the correlation is inverse. The erosion of parish council powers over recent years would seem to have reduced their legitimate spheres of activity. But the designation of a consultative role can, in fact, be seen to greatly increase their potential political competence, while the retention of the electoral base still gives a broad legitimacy to their actions which is recognised by both the public and the external authority. The influence of the council now depends on how the members organize themselves as a body and operate within the constraints of both public opinion and external controls to achieve acceptance of their competence. Such competence tends to be cumulative: once their competence in one sphere is established and publicly recognised other matters will be brought to the council and they will have the opportunity to broaden their areas of operation.

3. Structure and composition, past and present

In achieving political competence the internal structure of the group is a significant factor since it influences both the council's mode of operation and its relationship with the electorate. I now turn to the Bridgeham Parish Council itself and examine the structure and composition

of the group, presenting the corporate body as a set of interacting individuals.

In the context of the major changes in composition of the local population outlined above (see p. 121), the question of the council's representativeness is of great importance. By representation here I mean merely the passive reflection among the elected representatives of the range of socio-economic characteristics and interests found within the population as a whole; the problem of how the role of representative is operationalised will be taken up later. Table 13 summarises the social compositions of the councils from the last war to the present day and Table 14 gives more detail on the 1975 councillors.

The average age of the present Parish Council is only approximately 45 years. Although I have no figures for the ages of past councillors they seem to have a widespread reputation of being elderly and serving for many years. Since the second claim is certainly verifiable from the records - 20 years and more was not uncommon for membership - it seems fair to conclude that the Parish Council is now a younger body than it was in the past. Table 13 and the map combined show how much former councils were dominated by town centre residents, even as late as 1965 when development outside was well-established. The present councillors are well dispersed throughout the parish in old and new property. There is at present no councillor resident on the council estate, Willey Flatts, but Ernest Nelson lived there for 20 years before buying his own house on an adjoining road and he certainly identifies with the residents of the estate.

The striking changes in composition over the last ten years indicate that the Parish Council membership has kept pace with the emergence of new housing areas. All the new estates except the Tarmac have a resident on the council and the close links of that development with the council estate

Table 13. Composition of the Parish Council, 1945 -75

<u>Year</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Area of residence</u>	<u>Years in Bridgeham</u>
1945	Surveyor	High Street	life
	Rope manufacturer	High Street	life
	Co-op, manager	Worsall Road	life
	Dispensing chemist	High Street	life
	Rate collector	High Street	life
	Nurseryman	High Street	life
	Foundry manager	High Street	20 years
1955	Surveyor	High Street	life
	Nurseryman	High Street	life
	Doctor	High Street	30 years
	ICI engineer	High Street	15 years
	Teacher	Leven Road	23 years
	Painter & decorator	High Street	life
	Skilled workman	Willey Flatts	10 years
1965	Doctor	High Street	40 years
	ICI engineer	High Street	25 years
	Skilled workman	Willey Flatts	20 years
	Teacher	Leven Road	33 years
	Nurseryman	High Street	life
	Telephone engineer	Willey Flatts	20 years
	Housewife	High Street	5 years
	Housewife	High Street	?
	Housewife	High Street	?
1975	Housewife	High Street	15 years
	Teacher	Leven Road	43 years
	ICI engineer	Spitalfields	9 years
	Lorry driver	Worsall Road	29 years
	Butcher	High Street	life
	Telephone engineer	Worsall Road (new development)	life
	Secretary	Leven Road (new development)	3 years
	Journalist	Leven Valley	4 years
	Engineer ?	Green Lane	10 years ?

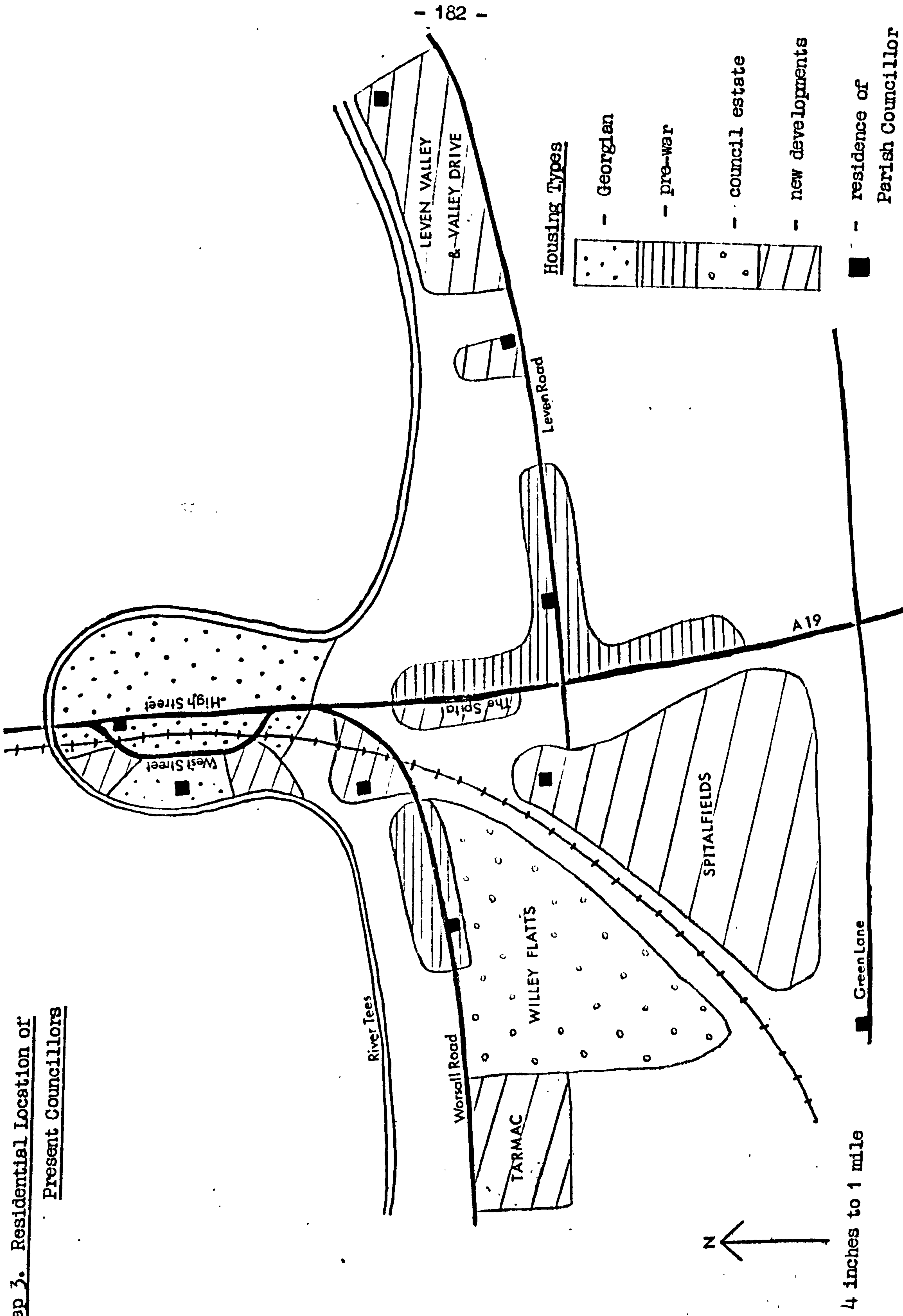
Source: Parish Council Minute Books

(see map for types of housing in these areas)

TABLE 14. Summary of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Social Networks of Councillors in 1975

Name	Age	Origin	Occupation	Housing Type and Area	Spouse's Origin	Years in Yarm	Year Joined Council	Church	Local Activities	Previous Residences	Location of Close Links Outside Yarm	General Character of Network Links in Yarm
MARGARET BROWN	50+	Cornwall	—	Old, West Street	London	15	1964	Roman Catholic	District Council Conserv. Assoc. Civic Soc. Comm. W.I. Flower Club	S. England Germany (army) Devon	S. England Cleveland	Close links with people of similar social status through assoc. Many weak links with electors.
RICHARD WAITE	41	Middlesex	I.C.I. Plant Manager	New, Spitalfields	Cornwall	9	1970	Methodist	Civic Soc. Comm. PTA Chairman Squash Club Methodist groups Residents' Assoc.	S. England Wirral Jamaica N. Ireland	S. England	Strong friendship links through assoc. Particularly strong links with new estates and new residents.
ERNEST NELSON	58	Middlesbrough	Driver for Scrap firm	Pre-war, Worsall Road	Yarm	29	1973	—	Labour Party R.A.F.A. Residents and Tenants' Assoc.	Middlesbrough India (RAF) Elsewhere in England (RAF)	Teesside	Weak and strong links mainly with old residents, particularly those on Council estates.
JOHN BRADLEY	28	Yarm	Butcher	Old, High Street	Lancashire	25	1973	Church of England	Conserv. Assoc. Civic Society	Manchester (training)	N. Yorkshire	Many weak links with all types through shop + strong links with old residents.
ALBERT MARSHALL	40	Yarm	G.P.O. Officer	New, Worsall Road	Thornaby	33	1973	Church of England	P.C.C. Allotments Assoc. Civic Society	Malta (army) Elsewhere in England (army) London (training) Coventry (training)	—	Strong links with older residents especially through church.
BARBARA WHITE	44	Kent	Secretary	New, Leven Road	Kent	3	1973	Church of England	P.T.A. Civic Society Tennis Club	S. England	S. England	Strong links mostly with new residents of similar social types.
LAWRENCE HART	49	Middlesbrough	Journalist	New, Leven Valley	Middlesbrough	4	1974	Church of England	Magistrate Civic Soc. Comm. P.T.A. P.C.C. Deanery Synod	Middle East (army)	Teesside N. Yorkshire	Fewer and weaker local links than others + many through church.
GEORGE WOODS	40+	N.E. England?	Engineer?	Old, Green Lane	N.E. England?	10?	1973	?	P.T.A. Conserv. Assoc. Civic Soc. Comm.	?	?	?
DAVID PATTERSON	67	N. Yorkshire	Retired School-master	Pre-war, Leven Road	Yarm	43	1949	Church of England	Civic Soc. Comm. P.C.C. Deanery Synod Local Trusts (P.T.A.) (School Governors)	N. Yorkshire	?	Very many and varied, with old and new residents, especially through church and school.

Map 3. Residential Location of
Present Councillors



were referred to above (see p. 121). This rapid absorption of in-comers into local affairs is demonstrated by the short length of time some of the councillors have lived in the town (four of them joined the council after less than five years' residence). David Patterson used to make a joke about how soon after coming to Bridgeham he was elected to the Parish Council - only 17 years! - and he put this down to the fact that he 'married in'. Although some Bridgeham people resent newcomers and the latter often feel they are not fully accepted by older residents, there are now sufficient in-migrant voters to put 'outsiders' on the council. There are two Bridgeham-born men among the members, but these are below average age and are some of the most recent to join; thus, any residue of the old-style council has gone.

The councillors as a group are representative not only in terms of their socio-economic characteristics and lengths of residence, but also in their interests, as demonstrated by their membership of voluntary organizations. We saw earlier that most studies of local councils draw attention to the high incidence of voluntary association membership and office-holding among councillors. Bridgeham is no exception to this. All the councillors are actively involved in at least two other local organizations and many of them are office-holders (see Table 14). Unlike some of the other councils studied, however, the organizations represented in the Bridgeham Parish Council cover a wide range of activities and so give the council as a body access to a diversity of opinions. The Civic Society and P.T.A. are disproportionately well-represented, but the other associations to which councillors belong are quite various. Thus, there is no tendency for a governing elite to be created by the overlapping membership of a limited

number of organizations. Earlier, I argued that the existence of channels of communication alone do not ensure an adequate exchange of views between councillors and electorate (see p. 37). In Bridgeham, however, it seems that the public in general is more aware of their local councillors and more inclined to approach them directly than was the case elsewhere (see Appendix). I suggest that this difference is due largely to the more local nature of Bridgeham Parish Council compared with most councils studied. This local base, moreover, is reinforced by the residential dispersal of the members in the parish, which gives a high probability that any resident will have a councillor in their neighbourhood.

In both cases - residential location and association membership - the potential links are two-way. Not only can the councillors get to know specific complaints and general opinions, but they can relay their own decisions back to people through personal contacts. Whatever the Parish Council may have been, or seemed to be, in the past - the "Old Guard" and "fuddy-duddies" were common descriptions - it now comprises a variety of individuals with different backgrounds and interests and is structurally well-suited to fulfilling its role as a grass-roots contact with the population of the whole parish.

From these data it seems that Bridgeham Parish Council has changed over the last 30 years from an 'élite' to an 'arena' council in Bailey's terms (Bailey, 1965, pp. 10-13). An élite council Bailey describes as an oligarchy where "the dominant cleavage is horizontal, the council being recruited from a minority" (*ibid.*, p.10). This may seem an extreme description of the Old

Bridgeham councils, but on the whole it is probably fair. Although there were no housing estates in 1945 there were certainly many working-class people in the town who were unrepresented on the Parish Council, except perhaps in a paternalistic fashion by their employers. This kind of council was seen earlier (see p. 30) to be the norm in English local government. An arena council, according to Bailey, is a body comprising "representatives of different segments of the public" and in this case "the cleavages are vertical" (*ibid.*, p.10). Such is the case in Bridgeham at present, with councillors coming from various residential and social groupings. I shall return to this point later.

Before analysing how the council functions as a body in local politics it is necessary to look in some detail at the individual members in order to understand why people serve the locality in this way, what experience they bring to the council and what interests they represent there. I will also give an outline of the social networks of each councillor at this stage as this will be an integral part of the later analysis. The data are summarised in Table 14 . George Woods was not willing to be interviewed and David Patterson moved away during the study, although I had had many informal conversations with him; the information on these two councillors is therefore incomplete.

The Councillors

The oldest and longest-standing member of the Parish Council is David Patterson. He came to Bridgeham from North Yorkshire in 1932 as a young graduate schoolmaster and stayed at the Grammar School all his working life.

As a geography teacher he was always concerned with the local area and tried to interest his pupils in the history and development of their town. He married a girl from an old Bridgeham family; her uncle was a Parish and Rural District Councillor for many years and was regarded as something like the local squire. This uncle had his own business and lived in a big old house in the town centre where he was very hospitable - several people told me that this was where decisions on local affairs were made in the old days. Patterson was elected to the Parish Council in 1949, at the age of 41, and only resigned his seat in 1975 when he moved from Bridgeham to live nearer his son. In 1970 he was elected vice-chairman and in 1971 he became chairman of the council. During his period of office Patterson brought in several administrative innovations (see below p.196) which all the present members agree are a vast improvement on the former system. The attention he paid to improving the functioning of the Parish Council is symptomatic of his concern for the town as a whole and the efficiency of its council. He had been a part of the old-style councils and realised that such a system was not suited to the changed nature of Bridgeham after its rapid growth in population and with the increasing influence of local government on what had formerly been town affairs.

When he resigned the chairmanship in 1973 - under his new regulations - David Patterson was persuaded to stay on as a councillor because of his valuable experience and local knowledge, for one of the drawbacks of a rapid turnover in membership is the danger of a council lacking experience in dealing with local problems. From his long service Patterson had a useful memory of dealings with the North Riding, Stokesly R.D.C. and other external bodies. Through his long residence and interest he had built up an unrivalled store of knowledge of the roads, footpaths and buildings of the parish - some

referred to him as a 'walking history of Bridgeham'. He was the elder statesman of the Parish Council.

But Patterson's most important assets were undoubtedly his 41 years at the Grammar School, where he was deputy head and a governor until his retirement. This gave him a personal interest in the people of Bridgeham because he had known so many of them as pupils and later as parents. Apart from Parish Council and school work David Patterson's other main interest was the Parish Church, where he was on the Parochial Church Council and Deanery Synod. He was also on the Civic Society committee. Mrs. Patterson was active in the Women's Institute, but took no part in public life. When Patterson left Bridgeham in 1975 his departure was regretted by a broad cross-section of people, old and young, local and in-migrant, for he was well-known as a sympathetic listener and a hard worker for the locality. All the councillors are approached to some extent about council business, but a very large proportion of these uni-directional links seem to have been made with David Patterson. Although he was on the Parish Council for 26 years he was able to adapt to the enormous changes in the area and was always receptive to different demands and interests; he knew and was known by a wide range of local people.

The next longest-standing member is Margaret Brown, the present chairman and the first woman to hold that office. Her history of local service is very different from that of David Patterson. She came to an old house in central Bridgeham in 1960 when her husband retired from the army and after her children had left home. They had moved around a great deal and she had done much committee work as an officer's wife. They were founder members of the Civic Society and Margaret soon became its secretary. Neither she nor her husband have ever worked in the town and they have no family

involvement in its affairs. Yet within four years of coming to Bridgeham her husband became a Rural District Councillor and she was elected to the Parish Council, and for 11 years since then both have become more and more committed to Bridgeham affairs in different ways. Her husband was on the R.D.C. from 1967-69, since when he has devoted most of his spare time to the Civic Society of which he is now the chairman. Margaret Brown joined the Parish Council in 1964 and the R.D.C. in 1970. At reorganization in 1974 she was elected to Stockton District Council as one of two Conservative members and in the same year she became chairman of the Parish Council. Thus, Margaret Brown has thrown herself wholeheartedly into local political affairs; she is a member of several voluntary associations and on the Civic Society committee, but her work as Parish Council chairman and a member of the District Council takes up the largest portion of her time and energy.

Margaret Brown has three sons - two married in southern England and one in Australia - with whom she has close and frequent contact. She has no effective links with other kin, none of whom ever lived in the north of England. Her other close links are with old-established friends outside the area, but through her council and association membership she has many less intense but frequently activated links in Cleveland, North Yorkshire and Bridgeham itself. These fall into three general categories: councillors and officers of Stockton District, people of similar socio-economic status in the locality whom she meets at social functions and in voluntary associations, and people from a variety of social groupings in the town - neighbours, tradespeople and electors - whom she knows as a resident, but particularly as chairman of the Parish Council. The direction of these links varies with their function: she herself forges the links with the officers and councillors,

the friends and acquaintances are bilateral ties and the superficial links with electors are almost entirely directed towards her, being instigated by other people through complaints and enquiries.

Richard Waite, the vice-chairman, is another who came recently to Bridgeham after a great deal of residential mobility. He too very quickly became involved in local affairs, though in his case it was through his interest in the schools for his three young children. He joined the Parent Teachers' Association, of which he is now chairman and was instrumental in starting the Spitalfields Residents' Association. He was elected to the Parish Council after only four years in Bridgeham, largely wanting to get a voice for the new residents on what he saw as an 'Old Guard' council. He stood unsuccessfully for the District Council two years ago as an Independent candidate, but in general his concerns are very local and he has no interest in party politics. He takes part in many local activities, including the Civic Society committee and the Methodist Chapel, but the P.T.A. is still his strongest interest. His wife is very involved in organizational and Chapel work. Waite has close contact with kin and affines in southern England and links with people all over Cleveland through his work at I.C.I; but his most active local links are with other people on the new estates in Bridgeham. Almost all these contacts are bilateral.

Ernest Nelson first put up for the Parish Council in 1952, but did not become a member until 1973. He was brought up in the docks area of Middlesbrough during the Depression and has been a committed Socialist ever since. He was in India with the R.A.F. during the war, but otherwise has always lived in Cleveland and has had a series of semi-skilled jobs on Teesside. He married a Bridgeham girl and lived on the council estate for 20 years before buying his own semi-detached house on the edge of Willey

Flatts. Nelson has been a Labour Party member for 30 years and is now secretary and agent for the constituency. He has stood for the District Council as a Labour candidate, but the entrenched Conservatism of the area gives him little hope of ever realising his political ambitions. His main concern, however, is with Bridgeham itself and particularly the working class population of the council estate and the old town. He was a founder member and is now secretary of the Residents and Tenants' Association. Nelson is the only Parish Councillor who is not a member of the Civic Society and he openly disapproves of some of their policies, feeling that they rate preservation higher than services for people. Although he is not a long-standing member of the Parish Council he has considerable experience of committee work and has been in Bridgeham almost 30 years; he knows a wide range of people, including most of the council tenants, and is well-known throughout the parish. His wife is in the W.I. and the Residents and Tenants' Association. Ernest Nelson has a married daughter in Bridgeham and three children at home. He has kin and affines on Teesside, but sees few of these regularly. He has links in North Yorkshire and Cleveland through the Labour Party and these include District Councillors for other wards, to whom he goes for political information since his own Councillors are Conservative. But the vast majority of his network links are with people in the town, particularly older residents, but also including a considerable number from the new housing areas. Most of his contacts in Bridgeham are bilateral; apart from his kin and friends, those outside are more openly political contacts and he seems to activate these himself.

Albert Marshall, John Bradley, Barbara White and John Woods all joined the Parish Council with Ernest Nelson in 1973 when there was no election, but none of them had stood for the council before. Albert Marshall was born in Bridgeham, where his father used to have a butcher's shop on the High Street. He spent seven years away from Bridgeham in the army and training

for his present job. His wife was born on Teesside and came to Bridgeham as a child. They have no children and both work outside Bridgeham, but are very involved in the affairs of the Parish Church, where they sing in the choir. Marshall is in the Allotments Association and his wife is on the Civic Society committee. David Patterson, who knew him at school, persuaded Albert to join the Parish Council. Marshall has colleagues at work in Middlesbrough, but otherwise his network is located almost entirely in Bridgeham itself, where he has kin and affines and also many acquaintances through life-long residence and the church. A majority of his links are with other long-standing residents and most are bilateral.

John Bradley was also born in Bridgeham, where he now works with his father in the only remaining butcher's shop in the town. He has only spent three years elsewhere, training in Lancashire, where he met his wife. He has a pre-school child and is by far the youngest member of the Parish Council (although this fact is not perhaps as significant as might be expected since in many of his attitudes he is more conservative than the older councillors.) His father is on the Civic Society committee and John is on the committee of the local Conservative Association; his wife takes no active part in local affairs. Bradley has kin in Bridgeham and nearby, but sees few of these regularly apart from his parents. Bradley and Marshall are, in fact, second cousins, but this does not create more than an acquaintance relationship between them and their only contact seems to be through Parish Council affairs. The vast majority of Bradley's contacts are made through working in the High Street shop, where he meets old and new residents daily. As he frequently discusses local affairs with his customers most of these links are bilateral. David Patterson also suggested Bradley should join the council and he is a valuable member, both because of his extensive network and his interest in the town's history.

Barbara White only came to Bridgeham from a life in the Home Counties in 1972. She became involved in the P.T.A. as soon as she arrived and a year later was on the Parish Council. She and her husband are very active members of the Tennis Club, but do not take part in any other regular local activities. Barbara works for a company based in the town and her husband in Darlington. They have two teenage sons at different local schools. All her kin and affines are in the south of England, as are most of her close friends, but she has fairly frequent contact with them. She has friends and acquaintances in Bridgeham through work and social activities, most of these are new residents and all are bilateral ties.

Lawrence Hart is the most recent member of the Parish Council, having been co-opted in 1974 when there was a vacancy due to the death of a member. He lived all his life in Middlesbrough, apart from being in the Middle East during the war, until he came to Bridgeham in 1971. He has, perhaps, more experience than any on the council of committees and local government through his work as a reporter for the biggest local newspaper. For ten years he has specialised in covering County and District Council meetings and consequently knows all the officers and councillors of both the old North Riding authority and Cleveland. So although both he and his wife come from and work in Middlesbrough and live on the very edge of Bridgeham, he brings a great deal of experience and specialist knowledge to the Parish Council. He is on the P.T.A. and the Civic Society committee and very active in church affairs. Patterson suggested that he should stand for the council, though he was selected from a number of applicants. Hart has a son at school in Bridgeham and another at university, and kin and affines on Teesside. The majority of his close contacts are scattered through North Yorkshire and Teesside and include some of the councillors with whom he has worked over the years. His Bridgeham links are chiefly through the church and voluntary organizations, all of which are bilateral.

Not a great deal can be said about George Woods. Not only did he refuse to be interviewed,¹ but the other Parish Councillors had very conflicting views about him, even as to his job. He lives on the edge of the parish in a rather isolated house. From accounts in the press he seems to work from home as a consultant engineer, and he travels frequently in the U.K. He and his wife are thought to come from the North-East of England and they have two sons at the Grammar School. He is very active in the P.T.A. and the Conservative Association and is on the Civic Society committee, but none of the other councillors knew him before he joined the Parish Council so it is difficult to say why he stood for election. Through his local activities Woods must have a great number of links in the local area.

British local government is run by amateurs, but it seems to have been common in the past for councillors to come from certain local families, or at least from a limited social stratum who were thought to have the necessary ability and leisure to deal with the business. This is no longer so in Bridgeham. Even the two men born in the town do not come from families with a history of local service. For all nine members this was their first experience of council membership. Apart from the fact that the Parish Councillors are all involved in an official capacity in other organizations, their differences are greater than their similarities in terms of life-histories and experience, and they comprise a mixture of old and new residents and a wide range of interests. To serve on the Parish Council requires a high

1. This was a refusal of a type I have come across before when doing fieldwork elsewhere. No reasons were given and it was not even a direct refusal, simply such prolonged and tortuous prevarication (including obvious lies) that it became clear that an interview would be impossible.

degree of commitment, yet the time-span over which such a commitment has evolved varies greatly. The councillors themselves are aware of the advantages of variety in their membership, particularly the different lengths of residence. They cite this as a source of their legitimate right as a body to make decisions which affect the community.¹ They also take pride in their availability to the electorate for consultation and advice.

Given this variety of backgrounds it is interesting to look at the precipitating factors which prompted the present councillors to stand for elections. The range of ages and stages in family cycles shows much more variety than has been found to be the case for other councillors (e.g. Glossop and Barking, see above, p.30). However, most previous studies have been of Borough or District Councils, where the time a candidate is able to give to the work is an important consideration, so it is not surprising that such councils tend to comprise older people, particularly the retired, and that women with young children are rarely members. Much less work is required of Parish Councillors, so the availability of spare time from family commitments is less likely to be a determining factor. It is nevertheless still true that, in the Parish as elsewhere, the councillors are the "joiners par excellence", and such public service will have to compete for time with obligations to other organizational activity (when I asked one councillor when I could come and talk to him he told me he had a meeting every night that week.)

As already stated, no-one knew how George Woods came to stand for election, but each of the other councillors said that it was a personal contact which precipitated the individual decision, rather than any political

1. The electorate, however, are perhaps less aware of the breadth of the councillors' residence span. I overheard a conversation one night in which two men agreed that "They're all outsiders on the council. There's only Ernest who's local." And later I discovered that even the clerk did not realise Marshall was born in Bridgeham.

ambition. In David Patterson's case it was a family tie; Margaret Brown was persuaded by her Civic Society colleagues; Richard Waite stood for the P.T.A. and the new estates, and Ernest Nelson for the council tenants. In all these cases the amount of persuasion involved cannot really be known in retrospect - the suggestions of friends or associates may have served merely as triggers to people who had already thought of standing. But for Bradley, Marshall, White and Hart the link which was activated came from inside the Parish Council itself. In these cases there was a deliberate attempt to achieve a certain structure in the council by incorporating people known to have certain abilities and interests. Waite wanted Barbara White on the council for her P.T.A. experience; Lawrence Hart was generally agreed to be a potential asset for his local government knowledge; and in the cases of Bradley and Marshall it seems possible that Patterson wanted to redress the balance in a Parish Council which was rapidly moving towards a totally in-migrant membership. In the three latter cases Patterson used his own non-political network links to persuade people who would not otherwise have joined the Parish Council to contribute the skills he knew they possessed.

The council is thus essentially a collection of individuals operating as a body under certain circumstances. There are some areas of common interest but, in comparison with other councils studied, the Bridgeham Parish Councillors are more remarkable for their variety than their similarity. I shall therefore examine how this heterogeneity of experience and interests is related to the capacity of the council for collective action, and whether the variety of its membership is a source of strength or weakness in the decision making of local politics.

4. The conduct of council business and modes of decision making

According to the standing regulations, a Parish Council must meet at least ten times a year; but in fact the Bridgeham councillors spend far more

time on parish business than the eleven monthly meetings held annually.

There have been some significant changes recently in the way the council operates, instigated by David Patterson. Firstly, the chairman, who is elected annually by the councillors, has been restricted to two years in office. Whereas formerly chairmen had often remained in office until they died (and one indeed had been there for 25 years!), the key position now changes hands much more frequently; although so far, at least, the new chairman has always been the next longest-serving member. Secondly, council work is allocated to the chairmen of sub-committees, thus spreading the load and allowing people to specialise in certain matters. There are four sub-committees: allotments, planning, cemetery and General Purposes - the latter comprising everything not included in the first three. All nine councillors sit on each committee and they all meet at what is known as the General Purposes Committee Meeting, which takes place the Thursday before each council meeting; it is thus not decision-making power, but only responsibility for background work which is allocated, all decisions being taken by the whole council. The different chairmen are responsible for finding out all the relevant facts and opinions on matters for discussion and they may call extra meetings if necessary. Within the General Purposes Committee four people are allocated particular responsibility for the High Street, roads and footways, open spaces and school matters. This means that each councillor (except the chairman) can develop a particular knowledge of one area of council business.

The clerk does not attend the General Purposes Committee meeting and no minutes are kept: I was not allowed to be present either, and councillors were rather unwilling to talk about these private proceedings. There was, however, a general consensus that the discussions which take place at these

meetings are a great asset in streamlining the business before the actual Parish Council meetings, which are now kept to an acceptable length, whereas they apparently used to seem interminable because of the great detail of the work involved.

The sub-committee chairmen are re-elected at the Annual General Meeting and they give a report of the year's work at the Annual Parish Assembly, which varying numbers of the public attend according to the interest in current local issues (eight were present in 1975). A further committee, the Weigh and Tolls, comprising the councillors and an appointed member of the public, is responsible for the administration of the Parish Council budget.

The local press attend council meetings, but their reports are usually very brief unless something contentious arises or there is a dispute among members. The presence of electors at monthly council meetings is rare - only two in the 11 meetings in 1975. The Bridgeham council publishes a synopsis of its work each month in a newsletter which is distributed via the public library. This is fairly widely read and much appreciated.

Much of the monthly business of Bridgeham Parish Council consists of extremely local issues which affect only a small proportion of the local population, for example the decision to allow a charity stall in the High Street or the tidying up of footpaths. These are the kinds of issues which lead people to question the relevance of Parish Council work and ridicule the time involved in every small decision. One of the largest responsibilities of the Bridgeham council is the October Fair, which occupies the High Street for several days and disrupts the life of the whole town. There have been many complaints from High Street residents over the years and demands that the Fair cease to be held. But some years ago the Parish Council held a

referendum and the population voted for the Fair to continue. It does, however, pose a major problem for the council (in liaison with the police) due to the damage and traffic congestion caused. There are also many occasion's on which the council's help is sought or it takes steps to make its voice heard in matters which may affect a large proportion of the electorate or be individual problems. In general it is the County and particularly the District Councils which are open to local-level pressure and the Parish Council's political power therefore depends on its members' ability to argue their case and make others listen.

The simplest way to demonstrate how the council operates is to give some examples of its approach to various matters:

- Case 1. The Parish Council received a verbal request from a resident in one of the Wynds off the High Street for a street light. When this was discussed at the meeting John Bradley and Albert Marshall were able to identify the three families who lived down there and give the information that they had outside toilets and that one old man was infirm. This made the application much stronger and Margaret Brown undertook to look into the matter with the District Engineer. Because of the bureaucratic structure, the same request sent directly in writing to the District Offices might have received no more than passing attention. Furthermore, an elderly resident might never have made an official request, preferring to mention the matter to a Parish Councillor he knew personally.
- Case 2. An example of the conduct of a different type of Parish business was the occasion on which it was pointed out that the Town Hall windows needed cleaning. Ernest Nelson suggested someone in the town who would do the job and since none of the other councillors knew the man so well it was left to Nelson, not the General Purposes via the clerk, to arrange the contract - and he later brought in the bill by hand. One councillor intimated to me privately that Nelson gained a good deal of local influence by the deliberate use of this sort of 'patronage' (his term), but in general most felt that this use of personal links made the more trivial duties of the council easier to fulfil and also was a good means of involving members of the community in public affairs.

Planning matters also demonstrate the importance of local knowledge and personal contacts in the council's ability to influence decisions.¹ Applications for planning permission are sent to the Parish Council for their local-level comments. Because Margaret Brown is on the District Planning Committee she does, in fact, bring the applications herself. Without this link the Parish Council would still receive the applications but it has the advantage of inside information on the likely attitudes of the committee. Copies of the applications are publicly displayed on the buildings concerned and in the Planning Office and it is up to any interested party to make their views known to the District Council, as Bridgeham Civic Society does. The Parish Council considers the applications at a meeting of its planning sub-committee. Often applications are due to be assessed at District level before the monthly General Purposes meeting, so an extra meeting may be called by Barbara White, chairman of the sub-committee.

Various aspects are taken into account when looking at the proposals: the external appearance, the effect on neighbouring property, and, for commercial property, the intended use of the premises. Within the old town conservation ranks as a high priority, which is supported by its status as a Conservation Area. The Parish Council also follows a policy of retaining as much residence as possible in the High Street. Sometimes the plans are acceptable, often with small alterations, but others they wish to prevent

1. The Parish Council notes for March 1975, included these comments:

"Planning is not only a matter of major decisions about large-scale demolition and reconstruction, but more often of patient attention over a long period of time to smaller applications for 'development'. This latter is certainly the case in Bridgeham. Without it undesirable changes would already have been much more noticeable". This is an admirable summary of the nature of planning in Bridgeham and of the council's watch-dog role with regard to planning applications.

altogether. The Parish Council can officially only make recommendations to the District Planning Committee, but in practice the local view is almost invariably followed, particularly in the case of Bridgeham, since Margaret Brown is a member of the committee and most councillors only claim to know their own area well enough to argue the case, which she does particularly forcefully. Under Stokesly R.D.C. Bridgeham had no representative on the planning committee and the council felt the town rarely got a sympathetic hearing because none of those making the decisions were directly involved.

Yet it is not enough simply to recommend rejection or acceptance of applications - sound reasons must be given. Like the Civic Society, the Parish Council lays heavy emphasis on preserving the character of the High Street, but its interests are considerably wider than this. Problems of access, parking facilities and the balance of services are often used as grounds for refusal, all of which require detailed local knowledge. Another important criterion is 'change of use'. Premises cannot be put to different uses without planning permission. This is cited both against planning applications and also retrospectively, when the Parish Council takes the initiative and requests the Planning Office to control certain undesirable developments. When businesses have expanded unacceptably or are considered an eyesore (and the Parish Council gets many complaints about such matters) the owners can often be compelled to improve their premises. Here the council has the advantage that Margaret Brown is present to advise on the best strategy for the presentation of a case. But success is not a foregone conclusion, as the following case shows.

Case 3. One of the High Street shopkeepers applied for permission to extend his premises. The Parish Council supported the application and Margaret Brown put a strong case to the District Committee. However, the outcome was a refusal because in this instance the Department of the Environment decided to step in as Highway Authority¹, they recommended refusal on the grounds of inadequate parking facilities and their

1. Because Bridgeham High Street was a trunk road in 1975, it came under the authority of the Department of the Environment.

pressure was obviously stronger than that of a District Councillor and the Parish Council.

From these examples it should be clear that the Parish Council operates through a high degree of co-operation by its members, which makes the diversity of its composition a strength rather than a weakness. Above all, the council is a committee, which comes to decisions through discussion and the use of local knowledge.

From the table it was evident that there is a high level of common membership of voluntary organizations among the councillors (see p 181). In the Parish Council, however, these group interests do not create problems or opposition. Since all but Ernest Nelson are members of the Civic Society, the Parish Council tends to agree with the overall aims of the former and there is little conflict between the two. The P.T.A. usually deals directly with the County Council, so has little regular interest in Parish Council business, and the P.C.C. is concerned specifically with church matters rather than wider public affairs. So there is no suggestion of factionalism within the Parish Council due to blocks of members in other organizations with divergent views. There is, of course, considerable congruence of interests between certain members, but since there is no opposing interest group this rarely leads to conflict, serving rather to establish the priorities of various members on matters that arise.

In an account of leadership in a North West Italian village, John Vincent gives a description of the decision-making process which is so strikingly similar to what I observed in the Bridgeham Parish Council meetings that it is worth quoting at length. He is concerned with the politics of reputation in a community where the norms of equality preclude

the accumulation of support through patronage, and says that

"The style of leadership in St. Maurice is reminiscent in some ways of the New Guinea 'big men'. Everyone can be a leader if he wants, but some people are more likely to get a hearing than others. These people are those who possess established reputations, acknowledged skills and expertise. People with a reputation appropriate to the particular decision-making context are most likely to have their suggestions acted upon. These 'big-men' take initiatives in proposing courses of action . . . but they never give orders to other people. As a consequence most communal decisions are only reached after long discussions. This discussion is needed to reach the necessary consensus for action, to give time for dissenting voices to be raised . . . When a decision has to be taken it is the people who have a reputation appropriate to the question under consideration who command attention and such a reputation takes time to acquire . . . Consequently, reputations are rather stable and positions of relative prestige become well-established and well-known

(Vincent, 1973, p.211).

Vincent's account applies almost exactly to the procedure I have described for Bridgeham, with appropriate local knowledge guiding the corporate decisions which are arrived at only after long discussions. Yet certain relationships stand out as being particularly important and reputations are fairly stable. Margaret Brown and David Patterson can in this sense be described as the 'big-men' of Bridgeham Parish Council, and, as the longest standing members, their reputations have clearly been built up over time, as Vincent suggests, although other factors are also involved.

David Patterson receives particular respect within the council. From observing the meetings it seemed that any suggestion of his will be listened to with particular attention and his opinions are usually deferred to as they are always considered and sensible, whereas all the others at one time or another put forward ideas which none agree with. George Woods stands in the opposite position - his suggestions are rarely taken up and often not even seriously considered. He has the reputation in the Parish Council of speaking without forethought and particularly for getting publicity for

himself. He uses exaggerated descriptions and melodramatic phrases knowing that the press will quote him and this is resented by the others, who prefer the Parish Council to have a more restrained image. For example, during 1974 there was much local concern about the obvious subsidence of a main road below which a new housing development had been built close to the river. Woods described the area to a reporter as "the Aberfan of Bridgeham" and this emotional analogy of course made a headline in the local paper. Although all shared the concern about the subsidence, the other councillors felt this was such obvious exaggeration that it would gain less attention from the County Engineers than a calm and well-founded appraisal of the dangers.

Margaret Brown's influential position as District Councillor is fully understood by the Parish Council, who know that she has access to a very specialised network of people whose favourable opinion is important to the success of much of their business. This also leads to some internal strains, however, for it means that Margaret Brown has a choice of role - what she cannot persuade the Parish Council to support she may well take directly to the District Council - and it is sometimes felt she does not distinguish the two clearly enough. She herself admits the dual role can be problematic; as she says, "sometimes I forget which hat I'm wearing." The advantages of having a choice of hats, however, are fully realised both by her and by the other councillors.

She does take great care not to voice her party political convictions in Parish Council affairs, but this still causes some animosity between Margaret Brown and Ernest Nelson, who stands at the opposite end of the party political spectrum. Nelson is sometimes accused of introducing party politics into council meetings; because he is the only open Labour supporter he seems to feel the need to express party views more than the others and this is definitely not welcomed. Nelson also causes antagonism when he speaks out against

the Civic Society. Although he is in favour of preservation he values services for local people more highly and resents what he considers the excessive influence of the Civic Society in Bridgeham affairs. He justified this to me by citing the example of the occasion many years ago when the Civic Society delayed the provision of street lighting because they considered the available fixtures were not in keeping with the Georgian High Street and the bridge, which is even older. Nelson feels that the Civic Society is a very 'middle-class' institution, a claim which its committee would not deny. In my view, this antagonism, although real enough on occasions, is also partly due to the fact that Nelson rather enjoys arguments, particularly if he can make Conservatives feel uncomfortable.

Thus, although there are certain internal status differentials, in general it is by pooling all their local knowledge that a solution can usually be found to the problems which face the council, and where ideas do diverge initially preference will often be given to the opinions of the member with the most detailed knowledge on that particular topic. Voting as such rarely takes place in Parish Council meetings, but after discussion of an issue the chairman invariably uses some phrase such as "Are we all in favour?" or "Is it agreed, then?", which gives an official opportunity for the expression of dissent and allows the clerk to record the decision in a formal manner. By this stage the decision is usually very clear-cut and opposition is rare.

Nevertheless, there cannot always be agreement. Issues which involve the councillors' particular interests are more likely to be disputed than small practical matters. To some extent the disagreements may merely be less visible than in many committees because the Parish Council chooses to have its initial discussions in private. This choice is in itself interesting. I referred earlier to Bailey's analysis and suggested that

in terms of its composition the Bridgeham Parish Council may be seen to have changed from an élite type to an arena council. But Bailey further characterises the two types by suggesting that an élite council has a strong incentive to present a united front to its public; because of its horizontal cleavage from them it prefers to close ranks and reach a consensus. On the other hand, an arena council, he says, does not damp down disputes because each member is responsible to those he represents and must be seen to be standing up for their interests (Bailey, 1965, p.10). Yet the post-war council records show considerable evidence of voting at the time when the council was largely élitist in composition, whereas during 1975 voting was minimal. Re-analysing Frankenberg's North Wales material (Frankenberg, 1957) and his own from India, Bailey suggests that the essential determinant of a council's tendency to compromise rather than allow open disagreement stems from its executive capacity: "Conflicts will tend to be resolved by compromise if the majority know that the minority must be carried with them on pain of taking no action at all" (Bailey, op. cit. p.9). In other words, where the decision-making body is also the executive body any action depends on the complete support of its members; this type of body, therefore, tries to reach a compromise, rather than voting on its resolutions. But the Parish Council's executive powers are extremely limited so, by Bailey's reasoning, there is no apparent need for it to reach agreement because there would be no minority in its ranks with the power to counteract its resolutions by withholding co-operation in the implementation of decisions. The Bridgeham council thus seems to occupy an ambiguous position according to Bailey's analysis, being of the arena type structurally, but yet invariably presenting a united front as a body in a way he says is characteristic of an élite council.

Despite the fact that it is obviously more agreeable to work without constant conflicts and close voting, I agree with Bailey that what Frankenberg calls the 'values of unity' are alone insufficient explanation for the preference for compromise. The large amount of time devoted to Parish Council business and particularly the duration of the General Purposes Committee meetings demonstrate the lengths Bridgeham Parish Council goes to to reach, or at least approach, agreement; and the fact that the 'ironing out' process of the preliminary meetings has only been found necessary since the council became an arena type show that some disagreements almost certainly occur in the initial discussions (as they do occasionally in the official meetings). There seem to be several reasons why this council has elements of both the ideal types of Bailey's typology. Firstly, the parochial nature of much of the business means that decisions are rarely questions of policy, resting on detailed knowledge rather than personal opinions, so can usually be reached by agreement rather than compromise. Secondly, on more far-reaching matters the council is advisory, not executive, and the councillors are also private individuals with alternative communication channels open to their use. Anything which is expected to be particularly controversial, yet about which councillors feel strongly, is likely never to be brought up in council meetings; instead, it will be guided towards other bodies which are known to be sympathetic, or a councillor may go to the press or straight to the District or County Offices. Because the Parish Council is an encapsulated structure the binding decisions are usually made at higher levels, so every councillor has alternative means of attempting to influence decisions when he or she disagrees with the rest of the council.

The only frequent open dissident to the majority opinion in Bridgeham Parish Council is Ernest Nelson and the argument set out above is supported

by the fact that he sometimes uses his Labour Party and Residents Association contacts as alternative channels of potential influence and occasionally writes angry letters to the press as well. Nelson is exceptional because he sees himself as the only representative (what Hill described as a delegate, see p. 39) of a stratum of the population whose interests frequently differ from those of others. If an élite council is dependent on the complete absence of conflict, then possibly because it is structurally an arena type the Bridgeham council can incorporate this small degree of conflict without allowing it to disrupt the generally good working relations of its members. Indeed, it sometimes seemed that the councillors welcomed the opportunity of voting out the occasional challenge as this emphasised the correctness and democratic nature of their decision making.

Kuper, taking Bailey's model as his starting point, believes that the neatness of opposition of élite and arena councils to some extent obscures the subtleties of the decision-making procedures actually observed. Kuper points to three particular techniques of conciliar decision making which Bailey ignores: the failure to take any decision, where the matter is postponed or dropped; ceremonial decisions, in which the debate and voting is not the actual decision-making process, but merely the official validation of a decision made elsewhere (for example, in the party caucus); and ambiguous decisions, that is, ones which are deliberately left open to different interpretations - a technique which both reduces discussion and leaves the actual decision up to others (Kuper, 1971, pp21 - 2). All three or these procedures can be observed in Bridgeham Parish Council on occasions. The first, the failure to reach any decision, usually means either that the matter is approached through another channel, such as the Civic Society, or by the direct approach of Margaret Brown to the District Council, or that

discussion of the issue is postponed until further evidence is collected. Ceremonial decisions take place in the Parish Council on matters actually debated and decided at the General Purposes meetings. The speed with which the council deals with some matters leads me to believe that these are pre-formulated decisions, and one councillor gave me further evidence of this when he divulged the information that councillors are occasionally asked to raise specific matters in the Parish Council meetings. Ambiguous decisions are not frequent in Bridgeham, since matters beyond the competence of the Parish Council are not usually raised for debate. Such issues, however, are sometimes resolved by the council's adoption of an extremely broad policy, which demonstrates that it has considered the matter but is aware that an actual decision is outside its competence. All three types of procedure, Kuper suggests, may be adopted by arena councils as an alternative to negotiating a compromise which would have unanimous support. This interpretation seems to fit the evidence from Bridgeham.

From his own data, Kuper makes a further point about the occurrence of conflict in arena councils. In analysing decision making through discussion among the Kgagari of Botswana, he notes that

"Factions do not emerge in all political contexts. As a rule, factional activity is significant only when an issue touches on the internal power structure of the village, or the distribution of jobs, but does not involve confrontation with outside authorities" (ibid., pp 83 - 4).

This is another reason for the virtual absence of open conflict in the Bridgeham Parish Council: most of the business concerns the achievement of political ends by influencing external authorities. It is therefore to the council's advantage to present a united front. Dissent in meetings might be seen as a threat to the local political structure, since it would cast doubt on the council's ability to act as a body and so would reduce the chances of political success in dealing with outside authorities.

In summary, then, what is observable at the Parish Council meetings is a well-oiled machine: matters are brought up and dealt with on the whole very rapidly. However, new business is often raised at the meetings or different contributions made and so discussions can still be lengthy. Occasionally disagreements were only thinly concealed, but the voting I observed seemed to be only a legal ritual. I found the councillors generally unwilling to talk about the events of the General Purposes meetings, and this remains a gap in my analysis. Various members said the discussions there were often heated and differences of opinion quite strongly held; yet Hart told me he had never known a vote at a General Purposes meeting in over a year's service; what the differences were and how they were resolved I can only guess. The following section, however, contains further data on the conduct of Parish Council meetings, which were observed throughout the year and were seen to present a specifically public image.

5. The ceremonial of council meetings.

Several writers have drawn attention to the importance of the ceremonial aspects of decision-making procedures (Frankenberg, 1957; Bailey, 1965; Vidich and Bensman, 1968). Audrey Richards suggests that council meetings are "often the most striking manifestations of the political structure, values and activities of the society in question" and that "Ethnographers (also) use their detailed observation of individual council meetings as indices of the accepted principles of social structure and of the tensions which sometimes underlie these"(Richards, 1971, p.4). I shall therefore include here an account of the procedure followed at the Parish Council meetings in Bridgeham and then see how these data can be interpreted to assist our understanding of how the council operates.

All the meetings I attended during 1975 followed exactly the same procedure and this was an extremely formal one. Meetings take place in the

Town Hall on the second Thursday of every month except August beginning at 7.30 p.m. The chairman and vice-chairman sit side-by-side at a table and the clerk sits at the end of the same table. The other members sit in a rough semi-circle facing the table and over the months I could determine no significance in the seating arrangements of the ordinary council members beyond order of arrival and proximity to the gas-fire in winter. The meetings start on time and are opened with a short prayer recited by the chairman for which everyone stands with bowed head. Apologies are announced - an average of one member absent at every other meeting - and then the clerk reads the minutes of the last meeting. If these are queried some discussion may follow and then the chairman formally asks for approval before she signs the minutes. "Matters arising" is the next item on the agenda, where topics related to the last meeting are discussed. The accounts, presented by the clerk, follow and then the reports of the various committees. The chairman asks each committee chairman in turn whether there is anything to report; if there is, this is discussed. Often nothing has arisen under some of the headings, but in the case of planning there is usually a long report to be made. These reports form the main body of the meetings, with much discussion of the details of each issue. The next item is the correspondence, which again is presented by the clerk. The final part comes under the heading of "Other Business", when councillors raise matters they have noticed themselves or which have been brought to their attention by members of the public. These are discussed and the appropriate committee chairmen are often delegated to attend to such matters. The meetings are closed by the chairman when there is no further business, rarely later than 9 p.m. and members usually linger in general conversation for several minutes. Often the formal end of the meetings is announced amid the general conversation from which it is scarcely distinguishable. Should a member or the public be present,

they would be allowed to make a comment only after the meeting had been closed, when they would be asked whether they had any particular complaint or other reason for attending. Throughout the proceedings members use the formal protocol of committees by addressing their remarks to the chair, invariably in the form of "Madam Chairman . . ." although in referring to addressing each other either first names or "Mr." or "Mrs." are used.

The rigid formality maintained at the meetings was their most striking characteristic, and this was highlighted in many cases by the mundanity of the issues being discussed. The ceremonial of the Parish Council meetings must therefore be assumed to be in some way important to the conduct of the council's affairs. It might be expected that if some or all of the councillors had particularly close inter-personal relationships then the conduct of parish business might require this rigid structuring in order to segregate official affairs from personal relations. I do not, however, believe this to be the case in Bridgeham since there are very few close links among the councillors and interaction outside Parish Council business tends to be limited to other organizational activity or large social gatherings, neither of which engender particularly informal behaviour. It is therefore unnecessary to maintain a strict ceremonial mode of conduct in order to mark off public and private relationships. Similarly, factionalism within the council is not a significant factor, so the ceremonial behaviour is not, as elsewhere, a means of preventing open hostilities which might otherwise erupt (indeed, one of those most often using first names and being addressed by such is Ernest Nelson, who has been shown to be most frequently in disagreement with other councillors).

One function of the ceremonial must be to enable the council to cope with a great number of divergent issues as quickly as possible. By dividing the various matters under headings and allocating responsibility the discussions tend to be more focussed and therefore more productive than might otherwise be the case. This suggestion is supported by the fact that Margaret Brown, as chairman, soon calls the meeting to order if members are drawn away from the immediate topic of business. But although this would account for the time-tabling aspect it would not require the high level of interpersonal formality described above. A second explanation might lie in the current chairmanship of Margaret Brown. She is extremely business-like and does not wish to spend more time than necessary on Parish Council business, taking any opportunity to reduce long discussions by using her role as District Councillor rather than pursuing the more protracted Parish Council negotiations, which must often be by letter. The chairman, however, although in formal control, could not enforce an unwanted ceremonial on eight other members. I did hear the occasional complaint of Margaret Brown when it was felt she had been brusque and tried to cut short discussions too soon, but in general a member who insisted on making further points would be heard and the council as a whole seemed to appreciate the way she used the chairmanship. Indeed, when on one occasion the vice-chairman took the meeting there were several criticisms of his inability to exercise control.

In seeking a better reason for the marked use of ceremonial behaviour in Parish Council meetings I was struck by two further factors. Firstly, that the formality is highest right at the beginning with the prayer and declines from then onwards to what is sometimes an almost unnoticed close;

and secondly, the contrast between the conduct of affairs in Bridgeham and those in Kirkham, a neighbouring parish where I attended a Parish Council meeting for comparison.

Kirkham was until recently a farming community, little more than a hamlet, whose population has been more than doubled by an influx of commuters who occupy the new housing estates there. Four out of the six Parish Councillors in Kirkham are farmers, indicating that the composition of the council has not kept pace with the changes in the local population as that of Bridgeham has done. There were several kinship and affinity ties among these farmers and it might have been expected that a high degree of ceremony would be necessary to conduct parish business in a council comprising four people with close links between them and two others, both comparatively recent in-migrants with no inter-personal connections. However, the contrast with Bridgeham was striking. When I arrived at the time announced on the village notice-board the school where the meetings were held was locked and deserted. Gradually the members drifted in, the clerk produced the key and the meeting began very late. One of the farmer members had sent apologies and the news of his trouble with a tractor was discussed by the others. The minutes were read, but after that the issues discussed followed simply by members raising them in no strict order. First names were used throughout, although in the chairman's case the formal address was also used intermittently. Even the date of the next meeting was altered to accommodate a member who was unable to come on the date arranged. A further notable contrast with the Bridgeham procedure was that the Kirkham council seemed to make great use of their clerk. Whereas the clerk in Bridgeham was very

clearly restricted to his formal role of dealing with the accounts, minutes and correspondence as instructed by the chairman, the Kirkham clerk seemed to take a much more active part in council affairs, offering advice and even dealing with some matters herself. (This may have been an exaggerated impression as the meeting I attended was in September, which was two months since the last one; the clerk, therefore, may have dealt with more than usual over the summer break. It was, however, the case that in the Kirkham survey several respondents named the clerk as a member of the Parish Council).

The difference between the beginning of the meetings and the end in Bridgeham and between those and the Kirkham meeting can, I believe, be ascribed to a single factor - the presence or absence of the press. Reporters never attend the Kirkham Parish Council meetings. On the other hand, two or three are always at the Bridgeham meetings, but they invariably leave before the end of the meetings, when they estimate that all important business has been dealt with. Quite why the Parish Council should be so concerned about the press is not immediately obvious, since the meetings are, after all, public. In the survey, however, we asked people how they got to know about public issues in their local area. 42% of the respondents gave the newspapers as their first source of information; 'general talk' came next, but this was mentioned by only 20%. Clearly, the Parish Council is not unaware of the important role played by the local press in disseminating information about its activities. It seems, however, that the press reports are somewhat mistrusted, and the fact that the Parish Council feels it necessary to produce its own monthly newsheet is evidence of this.

There are several reasons for this lack of trust. Firstly, as already mentioned, the press accounts of meetings are very brief and tend to focus on contentious issues. The reports are thus selective, ignoring most of the detailed, everyday affairs dealt with by the council and concentrating instead

on issues currently in the public mind or likely to involve conflicts among councillors or between them and sectors of the community. This is an unavoidable aspect of journalism: if the Parish Council meetings were reported in factual detail no-one would read them. In the councillors' view, however, the selection of a single contentious issue or the quotation of one member's exaggerated expressions (see above p.203) gives an unfair portrayal of the council's conduct of parish business. Secondly, the local papers are used a good deal by individual members of the council for expressing their personal views. On occasions councillors ring up the newspaper offices in order to publicise a problem; sometimes a reporter is sent out and often a striking headline and a picture accompany the report. The correspondence columns are also used fairly extensively both by councillors and other members of the public for the expression of personal views. In this way, matters about which councillors feel strongly are deliberately made into issues by the individual's use of the press. For both these reasons, the Parish Council correctly sees the press as dealing with particular issues, rather than the range of local business in which the council is involved. Furthermore, the papers focus on 'personalities' rather than the council as a body and this is clearly not the image the Parish Council would like the public to hold of it. This is supported by the fact that the press reports invariably include quotations and name the councillors involved, whereas the Parish Council's own newsheet is always written in an impersonal style and never mentions any member by name.

There is a third reason which I feel contributes in particular to Margaret Brown's insistence on the rigid protocol of meetings. As chairman of the Parish Council and a District Councillor she is frequently the subject of newspaper reports. She sometimes makes deliberate use of the press for publication of her views, which often results in unusually prompt action by the authorities. But in general she feels the press are antipa-

thetic towards her. This may be due to the persecution many politicians seem to feel as a result of constant press coverage, but in her case I think it has some foundation. Although when comparing my notes with the press reports after Parish Council meetings I never found any actual discrepancy in the quotations used, it was sometimes the case that taking the words out of context gave a different impression from that of the actual situation. Furthermore, since most of the reporters tended to be young and we were observing the meetings together, their underlying attitudes were revealed to me in informal conversations. They were in general sarcastic about the trivial nature of Parish Council affairs (presumably a reaction to being sent on such jobs) and when I told one I was making a study of local politics in Bridgeham he responded simply with the phrase "government by Margaret Brown." Clearly, such views do not make for objective reporting.

For all these reasons, then, the Parish Council prefers to present itself to the press, and hence to the public, as an official body acting in exact accordance with the rules, rather than as an informal decision-making group where inter-personal relations might interfere with the conduct of public business. The ultimate test of the validity of this would be to ascertain whether the same ceremonial was followed in the private meetings of the General Purposes Committee. If my reasoning is sound these would be devoid of ceremonial, although the time-tabling aspects would still be important to get through the business.

I have shown that a considerable degree of ceremony is involved in the conduct of Parish Council business and I have argued that this is because the council wishes to present a certain image of itself to the public - that of a corporate body operating within the formal rules of its legitimate constitution. In an anthropological analysis, however, we must go further

than this and ask why such an image is felt to be important to the Parish Council. The importance of understanding the use of symbols and the underlying implications of ceremonies is clearly stated by Gluckman when he writes that

"Mystical beliefs and ritual practices are most significant where they 'cloak' fundamental discrepancies and conflicts between the principles on which a society is based, or between conflicting processes set at work in a society by an apparently definite single principle"

(Gluckman, 1965, pp223-4).

Here Gluckman is using 'conflict' to describe incompatibility and inconsistency between social principles, and it is these inconsistencies which must be identified in the case of Bridgeham Parish Council.

In this chapter I have argued that because of its structural position in the local government hierarchy - being within the domain of the District Council and with power dependent on the delegation of the electorate - the Parish Council seeks to exercise power by influencing decision makers at higher levels. Furthermore, because of its lack of statutory power the council operates more by establishing its competence than by relying on legitimate rights. Both these activities benefit from the variety of the present council membership which reflects the socio-economic composition of the local population, and the fact that individuals make different contributions to the corporate decision-making process. Following Gluckman, I now suggest that the ceremony of Parish Council meetings, which emphasises the impersonality of an official body, operating through formal channels is indeed a 'cloak' for a fundamental conflict in the council's role in local politics. The inconsistency, I argue, lies in the fact that the council can only exercise influence by informal methods, such as the use of interpersonal relationships. This in no way implies a conscious use of ceremony

to deny illicit practices, for the legitimate role of the Parish Council is very ill-defined. But if it operated only according to its statutory rights and duties, the Parish Council would have very limited competence and could exercise little political power; these are achieved only by exploiting the structural and organizational resources of the council to the full. There is, therefore, an incompatibility between the Parish Council's status as part of the established local government structure and its mode of operating as a mediator for the local population. The hypothesis that influence depends on individual initiative, inter-personal relationships and manipulation, will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

BROKERAGE IN THE SYSTEM

In this chapter I argue that brokerage is the dynamic force in the political activity of the Parish Council. Since brokerage is not a corporate enterprise, the analysis moves from the group to the individual level. In order to do this I look first at the dialectical relationship between the individual and the group, by which individual action can be seen as the dynamic aspect of group activity. I then examine the scope for brokerage in the council's position and the way this is interpreted. Following the definition of brokerage outlined above - that it is enterprise in a situation of mediation, where profits derive from manipulation - I demonstrate that in mediating between the public and local authorities elements of innovation, manipulation and profit-accumulation are evident in the council's activity.

The third section relates the potential for brokerage to interpersonal relations and uses network terminology to show the councillors' differential resources as political operators. The following section portrays two particular brokers within the council and their different modes of operation and degrees of power, which I relate to their network resources. The importance of brokerage in local political activity is highlighted in the final section by the presentation of a comparative case from another part of Cleveland.

1. The individual and the group

Murphy has argued that the whole of social life may be interpreted as a dialectical struggle between the individual and the socio-cultural situation with which he interacts. Following Simmel, Murphy sees the

individual as a set of potentialities which ideally would develop to produce a complete and integrated personality. Such a personality would, however, be unique; hence this development is constrained by society which requires that all members assimilate certain common cultural characteristics. Since they are the product of multiplicities of other people over a long period of time, these cultural characteristics are in some respects alien to each particular individual. Thus, "the realm of culture becomes oppressive, incomprehensible and estranged" (Murphy, op. cit., p.132), and a dialectical struggle emerges from this situation in which: "Man has an inward orientation towards himself as a totality, but he is pulled outwards by his necessity to become part of a collectivity and to serve its requirements" (ibid., p.135). This is not merely a psychological problem for the individual, but a potentially disruptive situation for society, which must seek to preserve some unity and coherence in the relations of its autonomous individual components.

One expression of this dialectical struggle is manifest in the relationship of the individual and the social groups to which he belongs; a relationship which Murphy (and Simmel) see as being essentially founded on the conflict between group requirements and individual tendencies: "Individuals come into conflict with groups to preserve their individualities, and this conflict is central to the nature of the group and its potential for change and flexibility" (ibid., p.137). The relevance of this to the present material is that the dialectical view of social relations posits group membership as a form of individual expression and of conflict with others, rather than, as in structural-functional terms, as an expression of solidarity and common interests. Thus, the group is not a reified entity, but an arena in which certain social relationships are manifested, and it

is individual action which provides the dynamic force of group activity.

Murphy's discussion of norms is particularly valuable. Again, he reverses the commonly accepted view of norms as being the means by which society imposes order on individual action:

"The individual seeks security and order as a condition of his psychological functioning, but society just as certainly requires tension and flexibility. The individual, therefore, must be predisposed to activity, and, given the uniqueness of every situation, he must have latitude for action. The norms provide the image of order and fitness; they bind time and activity in the mind, but they cannot be allowed to impede their flow. They also promote the image of value and purpose in a world that is permeated with particularities of interest and indeterminacy of the results of action. Norms have their functions as the scenario of activity"

(ibid., pp. 240-1).

Thus, norms, which apparently provide order and constraint, in fact allow individual activity to be pursued in a socially acceptable way; for, according to Murphy, norms are inherently flexible and are open to interpretation. It would seem from these arguments that group membership may be the best means of individual expression, since it brings the individual into conflict with his fellow group members and with the norms of the group. Moreover, it is the dialectical struggle in both cases - between the individual and the group and between norms and activity - which promotes dynamic social action and development.

Bailey has put forward remarkably similar arguments about the relationship between the individual and the group and goes so far as to say that

"The concept 'individual' . . . acquires meaning only with reference to a given collectivity . . . the term 'individual' does not merely acquire meaning by being logically opposed to 'collectivity', but carries with it also a more empirical sense of being hostile to the collectivity"

(Bailey, 1973, p.322).

And Bailey, too, stresses that social rules are general and therefore open to individual interpretation in particular situations, arguing that "Every rule leaves some degree of choice . . . rules are both constraints and at the same time resources" (ibid., p.324).

The dialectical approach, as advocated by Murphy, may be seen to support the foregoing analysis of the Parish Council as a body. The normative framework within which the council operates provides public justification for individual political involvement and a means of ordering local affairs; yet the flexibility of the norms is such that initiative and personal interests are not proscribed in individual activity within the council. Furthermore, the committee-like style of operation of the council and its emphasis on individual contributions promotes awareness of areas of agreement and of conflict in such a way that group decisions can be seen as the outcome of individual struggles. (In this sense, the Parish Council may be seen as the embodiment in miniature of the public assemblies Rousseau advocated as educative decision-making forums where members would be made aware of the divergence of views). Finally, although Murphy gives conflict a central place in his analysis, he argues, like Gluckman, that ritual is a mediating technique - in this case between norms and action.

In the present context I will use Murphy's dialectical approach as a means of moving from the group to the individual level in my analysis. Having examined the corporate activity of the Parish Council, I will now look at the individual action which is the dynamic force behind this. I argue that through brokerage, individual members can use the council to increase their own power, and that the power of the council in turn depends on individual activity.

2. The scope for brokerage in council work

The role of the Parish Council is one of mediation between the local population and external authorities. I now argue that in the case of Bridgeham the operation of the council in fact involves brokerage. Before the political activity can be described as brokerage, however, two further characteristics must be present in addition to mediation. According to the definition adopted, brokerage will also include enterprise - the seeking out of opportunities - and manipulation during mediation; both these, moreover, must be pursued for profit. In this section I will show that there is scope for brokerage within the institutional framework of the Parish Council.

(i) The creation of an enterprise through innovation

Bailey suggests that to innovate means "to put an item in a context in which it was not found before" and that "the essential part of an innovation is a relationship between persons, in which one accepts an invention from another" (Bailey, 1973, pp. 8-9). He also argues that innovation involves change which is specifically planned; it is goal-oriented and purposive. Hence, it might seem that because the Parish Council's mediation role is an official and recognised part of the local government system it cannot be seen as innovatory. And it is certainly true that this kind of mediation is not of itself innovatory, as is that of the missionary or trader who deliberately initiates links between two groups which were previously unconnected.

However, Bailey later suggests that the situation in which innovation may be expected to occur is one where "An accepted way of achieving some necessary end no longer works because the environment has changed . . .

necessity cancels the deterrent effects of uncertainty and makes a man decide his priorities" (ibid., p.309). This description closely reflects the situation of the Parish Council. Its role is to mediate, but due to its limited powers, the unresponsiveness of higher authorities to local-level views and the apparent lack of involvement of its electorate in political affairs, the goal of mediation must be achieved by other means than the official bureaucratic channels. The council must introduce new methods of communication, both with the local population and with local government decision makers, and these must be accepted by both the other parties. Because the normative role of the Parish Council is flexible - even ill-defined - I would argue that it is possible for the council to exploit its niche by seeking out different ways of operating within the framework of bureaucratic restrictions. Moreover, since such alternative courses of action are new and untried, the risk of failure is automatically present and the choices involved are therefore strategic.

The council makes strategic choices in dealing both with the local population and with external authorities. The decision to put out a newsletter can be seen as the deliberate creation of a communication channel with the electorate. Similarly, the councillors' willingness to be approached by members of the public, listen to their complaints and take these up in council meetings is another means by which the scope for links is increased; furthermore, both these have been accepted and adopted by local people. The sub-division of responsibilities and the consequent development of areas of expertise also enhances the council's ability to cope with local issues. All these are innovations. Earlier councils did not make any particular attempt to publicise their activities, nor were their members sufficiently wide-ranging by residential area or interests

to maintain close grass-roots contact. Thus, although the official structure allows for communication, in that Parish Council meetings are open to the public and the council can be addressed by letter, there are means of increasing the contact, and in the case of Bridgeham these have been developed and built into the council's mode of operation.

In relation to external bodies there is a wide range of possible links and modes of communication and the strategies of choice are more complex. In this context, the enterprising council is one which gets to know the structure of local government and the personnel and policies involved in great detail, for the presentation of a case can influence its success or failure. On many issues there is a choice of means of communication between an official letter, an enquiry by telephone, or a personal approach (or the council may, of course, decide not to take action on a particular issue). And on the direction of communication the range of possibilities is even wider: the councillors and officers of both the County and District Councils, the press, voluntary associations, business concerns, or government departments, to name only those approached with some regularity. The official structure contains established channels for consultation between parish councils and the higher echelons of local government; but the speed with which matters are attended to and even the favourability with which they are received - that is, the achievement of the mediation goal - depend greatly on the selection of a suitable strategy in each case. Thus, an issue which might take several weeks to reach the agenda or a particular committee might be dealt with at once by the appropriate department (as in Case 1. above). Through their familiarity with different parts of the local social system and their links with external personnel the councillors as a group can choose the strategy most likely to succeed.

Many local issues are repetitive and can be dealt with according to past experience, rather than by innovatory means; others, however, are unique and require that a suitable approach be devised. In formulating a strategy of mediation risk is involved, since it is not always possible to adopt an alternative should the first approach fail. Repeated success, however, may lead to the institutionalization of procedures which were first adopted experimentally. Furthermore, in performing its mediatory role, the council does not only take up matters raised by members of the public, but also initiates actions itself on a variety of issues based either on the councillors' particular interests or on their observation of the parish and its needs. W. Harvey Cox has pointed out that "The capacity for taking initiatives within the permitted framework is limited only by the shape of demands and the imaginations of parish councils" (Cox, 1976, pp. 210-11). The imagination of the Bridgeham councillors is indeed fertile.

It should be emphasised that the council does not always rely on its capacity for innovation. On some occasions the Parish Council operates quite formally through the official channels provided for its use. Several writers on brokerage, including Barth, see a contrast between institutionalised mediation and that based on innovation and enterprise (Barth, op. cit., p.7). Merton, in analysing 'deviant' forms of adaptation, suggests that whereas conformity is the acceptance of both 'culture goals' and 'institutionalised means', innovation implies acceptance of the goals but rejection of established means of achieving these (Merton, op. cit., p.140). These distinctions are indeed important. What is interesting with regard to the Parish Council, however, is that it can choose whether to act in an

institutionalised or an innovatory fashion, and this in itself may be a strategic decision in political terms.

In terms of innovation, the relationship between the individual and the group is crucial. For although the final decision on a course of action is corporate and the result of discussion, innovation itself stems from the contribution of individual councillors, or at least from an amalgamation of these. It is in this area, particularly, that the dynamic dimension of the group-individual relationship emerges. This can be highlighted in several ways. Heppenstall suggests that a local council may provide "a climate receptive to innovation" (Heppenstall, 1973, p.160). This is particularly important where innovation is a problem-solving device. For example, when the Parish Council is discussing by which means to try to exert influence it will, as a group, be eminently receptive to innovatory suggestions. Thus, as Heppenstall argues,

"Community action enables an individual to see more clearly the choices confronting him, and the relevance of various alternatives. As well as creating conducive material conditions, community action offers a wider range of ideas: enlarging the possibilities for action" (ibid., p.159).

In this sense, the Parish Council as a body benefits from the innovatory ideas of individual members. But the reverse situation may also obtain, whereby individual members attempting to innovate new projects rather than solve problems benefit from the corporate nature of the group. By operating through the council, the individual need not take all the risks of innovation himself; for in adopting the innovation as a group strategy the council also takes on corporate responsibility for the outcome. In this sense, the legitimacy of the council may be an important asset for the individual innovator to harness, since the framework of a formally constituted body enlarges the scope for action. Thus, council membership offers many resources useful in innovation.

Heppenstall concludes that councils may be either traditional or progressive in outlook and that "Group decision making within official bodies can do more to foster or stultify attitudes and motivations than can the actions of individuals, whose novel behaviour - without sanction of social approval - will be classed as deviance rather than development" (ibid., p.161). Bridgeham Parish Council definitely offers its members a receptive climate for innovation and the dynamics of the group-individual relationship lead to the creation of new means of mediation.

(ii). Manipulation

An element of manipulation has been demonstrated implicitly in what has already been said about the Parish Council's corporate performance of the role of mediator. In presenting themselves to their electorate through the newsletter the councillors emphasise successes, progress and action and do not omit, but play down the failures and delays, usually attributing these to adverse powers beyond their control. Similarly, in presenting a case to an appropriate external body for consideration, the facts are presented in the way the council estimates has the greatest chance of success. Furthermore, information may be transmitted at once or retained for future use; the timing of political events can be crucial to their outcome and many strategic choices are involved here. People, too, may be manipulated to some extent by building up obligations through giving assistance, or by promises of future help.

Between the group and its individual members, too, manipulation can be seen to operate. As suggested, most members have certain specific interests to which they will wish the council to give priority, and so individuals will also be engaged in the processes of arguing cases and giving or retaining information in the way most likely to achieve a desired result. This is an area of potential conflict and manipulation will

be more fully examined later in relation to social network resources.

iii. Profits

It is a fact that a great deal of Parish Council work is of an essentially trivial nature: rabbits eating cabbages on the allotments, holes in the road and the protection of trees are typical examples of the monthly business. The question of profits is therefore particularly interesting. Council work at this level brings absolutely no financial gain, and does on the contrary involve a considerable loss of leisure time. There may be a certain degree of prestige associated with Parish Council membership, but from neither the councillors nor their electorate did I get the impression that this was an important consideration. For example, the two councillors who were best-known - David Patterson and Margaret Brown - were esteemed as much for their other activities (in the church and school and the District Council, respectively) as for their membership of the Parish Council. Also, few of the survey respondents knew all of the councillors; thus, prestige would not be a good reason for engaging in council work. A stronger element of profit derives from the personal gratification this kind of public service engenders; there is a certain degree of altruistic satisfaction to be had in giving one's time for a period to coping with public and individual problems which, however, trivial they seem, are not immediately soluble by a member of the public alone.

But the major source of profit, I would maintain, derives from the influence the Parish Council undoubtedly achieves in public affairs. This is reminiscent of Eidheim's contention that 'acknowledgement of expertise' can be an entrepreneur's main profit (see p.92). My argument here is founded on Barth's and Boissevain's emphasis on the accumulation of credit as political capital which is convertible into resources for future enter-

prises. It is through preventing rabbits eating cabbages on the allotments, getting preservation orders on trees and holes in the road mended that the Parish Council as a body gradually builds up public acknowledgement of its competence to deal with local affairs. This acknowledgement is credit which can be stored as capital and later converted for use when the Parish Council takes on bigger issues, such as fighting for more school places, or the conservation of the town centre. The success of the council in apparently trivial matters creates public support which can be generalised to different issues which may be of more immediate concern to the councillors themselves.

Finally, in fighting small causes the council also increases its experience and ability to operate the system and these, too, are political capital which is convertible for future use. Thus, like those of other enterprises studied, the profits of Parish Council work are cumulative and the profit-making activity must be seen as a process through time, a career.

But it is perhaps the question of profits which most clearly suggests the close interdependency of the group and the individual. I have argued that the framework of the corporate group - both as a forum for discussions and as a legitimating body - offers certain advantages to councillors seeking to innovate. They benefit both from the receptive environment and diversity of ideas and from the collective responsibility of the council. The other side of this coin, however, is that council membership is also a constraint. Not only must the other members be persuaded to adopt an individual's viewpoint, but the profits of the enterprise are apparently accumulated by the corporate body and not by the individual innovators. (That this is so is demonstrated by the fact that the public recognises the Parish Council as a politically powerful body, but does not differentiate much between individual

councillors). In describing the Parish Council, however, I have repeatedly emphasised that it comprises a collection of individuals, united largely by council membership alone. To suggest a common pursuit of profit would therefore be somewhat contradictory. And indeed, when we turn to the individual action of council members, the picture is a great deal more complex.

All the councillors must be said to be motivated by the pursuit of profit, to some extent in the sense that they wish to influence decisions in the direction they feel is best for the town; if this were not so, council membership would be meaningless. Furthermore, since the council as a body is influential, it follows that its members are competing for power over the direction of this influence. I have already suggested that there is some degree of differential status among the councillors in that, through length of service, experience and recognition of expertise certain councillors command the respect of the other members (see above, p. 202). These councillors can exercise greater influence over decision making and successful innovation will further enhance an individual's standing vis-à-vis his colleagues. It is also the case that many of the councillors have marked personal interests they wish to pursue, and it is in these areas that personal influence will be exerted. As Vincent says, "Leadership is an entrepreneurial activity and the prizes for which people compete are convertible into additional resources for further competition" (Vincent, op. cit., p.211). Thus, the profits of individual action are recognition of competence by fellow councillors, since this gives the individual increased power over decision making.

My argument is, therefore, that while the Parish Council as a body seeks to accumulate political competence store this as credit and utilise it in future situations, exactly the same process operates among the individual members: recognition of personal competence will increase the individuals

chances of influencing the group over decisions in which he has a particular interest. It is here that we see Murphy's dialectical conflict very much in evidence; for Parish Council activity - in any more meaningful sense than passive representation by mediation through formal channels - is, in fact, the outcome of the power struggle of its individual members. Within the council individuals are seeking to increase their own influence over decision making and in doing so they promote the corporate ability of the council and its public reputation for competence.

In the operations of the Parish Council as a body, therefore, all the elements of brokerage are present - mediation, innovation, manipulation and profit-accumulation. In each of these processes, however, it is the activity of individual members which provides the dynamic force of the council's actions. The conflicting interests of the individuals within the council and between individuals and the corporate group give rise to a power struggle as different members seek to influence decisions by harnessing the resources of the group. The argument that the council itself can be manipulated by individual members and that there is a degree of power struggle within the council as a body does not contradict my earlier contention that open conflict among councillors is rare and that the decision-making process is one of long and detailed discussion, usually guided by the councillor with the most intimate knowledge of the issue at stake. The objectives of the competition and the strategies are covert, not openly admitted to by the individuals concerned and often not recognised by the other council members.

What I am suggesting, then, is that because it has the assets of legitimacy and recognised status, the Parish Council is used by some of its members as a niche for brokerage and that successful brokers are able to launch the council into new projects and exercise personal influence over local affairs. But whereas the council itself provides all members with

important resources, within the group the ability to achieve personal influence depends upon individual assets. The councillors may be differentiated by status within the council and, since deference is paid to expertise and experience, the distribution of power varies not only between individuals but also between different issues. Also, as Boissevain has suggested, some individuals are more willing and able than others to devise strategies and manipulate for profit. Councillors differ in their willingness to enter the internal power struggle: some chiefly wish to mediate to the public advantage and increase the influence of the corporate body (Marshall, Patterson, Bradley, Hart and White), whilst others are primarily motivated more by considerations of personal power, or at least of curbing others' influence by competition (Brown, Waite, Nelson and Woods). Thus, these two categories can be seen to comprise those who are respectively unwilling and willing to try to manipulate the system, take risks and convert credit into political capital on their own behalf. Among the second group, however, only Brown and Nelson are also able to manipulate, in that their strategies have a high success rate.

But a far more important source of differentiation among the councillors are the resources each has through his or her inter-personal network. Since the Parish Council operates by transmitting information and exercising persuasion with those in authority, the type and quality of inter-personal relationships and the use made of these are key variables in the internal power structure of the council. Network links constitute the assets which individual members bring to the council, and they also provide the resources which can be manipulated for individual profit through brokerage.

3. Social Networks as resources

Numerous papers have been written on the use of social networks as a methodological tool in social anthropology and the alternative definitions of the various concepts involved and I do not intend to document these here; instead I will merely outline the main advantages of the approach in relation to the present data and single out two particularly useful developments.¹

Social network methodology evolved primarily as a means of mapping out those social relationships which do not fall into any institutional categories. As such it is an approach which avoids making any prior assumptions about the importance of formal groups or structural relationships. It does not, however, exclude these from consideration. Indeed, one of the great advantages of network analysis is that it can cope with both formal and informal social linkages and can account for such processes as manipulation and the exertion of influence as well as the more institutionalised types of interaction. Network analysis envisages society as comprising numerous individuals linked to each other by interpersonal relationships, and hence to others by indirect ties which eventually ramify infinitely to include all people everywhere. Social networks may thus be seen as being anchored to an individual, a group or a locality and as being bounded or unbounded. They may operate within a structured framework or cut across all categorical and institutional boundaries and the network of relationships involved in one aspect of social life may for analytical purposes be abstracted from the multiplex social behaviour in which it is embedded.

In Bridgeham investigations into local sources of political influence rapidly led to the study being focussed on the Parish Council. Nevertheless, I believe it is still useful to look at local political activity in terms

1. Useful reviews of the literature pertaining to network studies have been produced by Whitten and Wolf (1973) and Mitchell (1974).

of social networks for two reasons. Firstly, although the Parish Council is an institution, a corporate body with certain rights and duties, these are not wholly prescribed by its constitution, but allow considerable scope for adaptation to local circumstances. Furthermore, there are no established roles or relationships within the council. There must be nine members, including a chairman and vice-chairman, but beyond this the part played by each member is open to individual interpretation within the constraints of the group itself. Thus, despite the framework of the formal body, its influence is the result of the roles adopted by the various members and their inter-relationships with each other, and these are not static but change with time and local circumstances. Secondly, the influence of the Parish Council depends on its external links with other bodies and with the general public. Some of these are categorical links, but the majority are of the type best analysed by the use of network concepts, for example the ties of friendship and neighbourhood. Network analysis therefore seems an ideal method by which to approach the political processes observed in Bridg-ham in both the formal and informal spheres and to explain the high degree of influence exerted by the Parish Council as compared with both former councils and with other bodies of similar structural status.

Network analysis does not of itself provide a theory of social relations, but it is a set of concepts which enable us to examine how individuals and groups interact in both formal and informal ways. Katz has suggested that networks may be seen as "the language of social participation" in that "ego's social networks indicate the scope of his participation in his society" (Katz, 1966, p.200). An examination of the social networks involved in local politics will therefore highlight aspects of the social structure and the way individuals operate within these, and it is thus a means of relating

the various political groups and institutions by showing where and how people participate in the processes of each.

One of the most useful theoretical frameworks which can be used in combination with network analysis is that of exchange theory. In the analysis of political activity the valuables exchanged and the transactions entered into usually involve intangible aspects of social relations such as power, political, support, information and advice, and network analysis, with its consideration of both the structural and interactional features of relationships, has proved a useful methodological tool for isolating and expressing the behavioural aspects upon which exchange theory depends (A. Mayer, 1966; Barnes, 1968; Kapferer, 1973). This approach will be retained here, in keeping with Barth's transactional analysis of brokerage.

Within the general terminology of network analysis, two particular developments are utilised here: the notion that networks provide access to resources, and Granovetter's theory of the strength of weak ties. The conceptualisation of network linkages as being a means by which an individual can gain access to valuable social resources he does not himself possess has been usefully presented by Boissevain. Through transactional analysis and his notion of first and second order zones in the network (see above p. 96), Boissevain shows how individuals seek to increase their power by entering into relationships with people who control useful resources. In a political context such resources may comprise information, decision-making ability or merely support. These are amassed on an exchange basis and the political operator will be prepared to manipulate his network of personal relationships in order to maximise his resources, either directly or through intermediate links. Thus, "individuals themselves are in large measure responsible for the contents and structure of this social field. It provides a recruitment field for the action sets and communication paths which they must build to

solve certain problems" (Boissevain, 1974, p.146).¹ I have argued that within the Parish Council the member with the most detailed knowledge of an issue or the appropriate contacts will guide decision making. Hence, potentially useful information and linkages will be deliberately built up by individuals wishing to increase their power within the group.

In conjunction with the conceptualisation of social networks providing access to resources the notion of 'contingency politics' will be useful in the analysis. This stems from the writings of Easton and is not usually associated with network analysis. But I believe it is particularly illuminating with regard to the mobilisation of network resources. Easton suggests that certain political relations "are¹activated for specific purposes and with respect to limited objectives or contingencies", and that an informal structure which arises only in certain circumstances may be called a "contingent political system" (Easton, 1959, p.237). Thus, each local political issue may be seen as a contingency requiring a different response and the mobilisation of different social resources. This may involve the use of statutory powers, group organization or the activation of personal network links; a powerful politician will be one whose resources fit a variety of political contingencies.

1. Robert Walker has taken this conceptualisation even further by suggesting the term 'sociometric wealth' be used to refer to "the number and type of links by which individuals participate in society" (Walker, 1974, p.26). Thus, the network itself is seen as a resource and sociometric wealth can be measured and categorised. In my opinion, this formulation tends to reify the network and also reduces the aspect of fluidity, which is crucial to the notion of access.

If network links are to be used in this way by local politicians, then the nature of the relationship involved is clearly important. Granovetter argues that because a 'strong' tie between two people means a large investment of resources, particularly time, in the relationship, those with whom ego has strong links also tend to be tied together in the same way. 'Weak' links, by contrast involve much less investment of resources and there is therefore little likelihood that the people with whom ego has weak links will have links among themselves.¹ Granovetter then introduces the term 'bridge', which he defines as the only local path between two points. Because of their tendency towards triad-formation, strong ties are seldom the only links between two people and are therefore unlikely to form bridges. It is weak ties that function as bridges, although Granovetter notes that "Weak ties are not automatically bridges. What is important, rather is that all bridges are weak ties" (*ibid.*, p.1364). The significance of bridges is that because they are the only path between two points they are the only source of exchange and are therefore more important in access to resources than strong ties, which tend to form overlapping circles. Granovetter holds that whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people and travel greater social distance when passed through weak ties rather than strong. In the exchanges within a social network, therefore, it is the weak ties which are most important: "The removal of the average weak tie would do more 'damage' to transmission probabilities than would that of the average strong" (*ibid.*, p.1364). As Granovetter suggests, the application of his theory is particularly important in the analysis of local

1. "The stronger the tie between A and B, the larger the proportion of individuals in S (set) to whom they will both be tied, that is connected by a weak or a strong tie. This overlap in friendship circles is predicted to be least when their tie is absent, most when it is strong, and intermediate when it is weak" (Granovetter, 1973, p.1362). Granovetter supports this contention with evidence from the literature and demonstrates that where there are strong ties there is a tendency for relationships to form triads of equal strength (the triad is his example, the theory applies by implication to greater numbers of links).

political activity.

Weak ties are more open to manipulation than strong ties because they tend to be single-stranded. Moreover, where weak ties are bridges they are important as sources of ideas, information and influence from sections of the population socially distant from ego. Strong ties, by contrast, tend to encapsulate ego and provide only limited knowledge of the world. Weak ties are therefore crucial to the individual seeking political influence because they give him access to resources outside his immediate social group. The potential for leadership is therefore affected by the strength of ties in that it is only through weak ties that a leader can amass a community-wide following (and conversely, weak ties bolster the leadership because all the followers feel they can influence the leader through the intermediate bridges). Granovetter therefore concludes that

"Weak ties, often denounced as generative of alienation, are here seen as indispensable to individual's opportunities and to their integration into communities; strong ties, breeding local cohesion, lead to overall fragmentation" (ibid., p.1378).

I argued earlier that the networks of the councillors as a body are put into service in a variety of situations and that the council is successful because its network resources cover the whole range of local events; variety becoming a source of corporate strength. Here I propose that the differential network resources of the councillors, the strength of these links and the individuals' willingness and ability to manipulate for political goals, create variations in the degree of personal control exercised over public affairs. The councillors who have exclusive access, through bridging, to network resources that are useful in certain political contingencies have more power, since the other members must look to them to exercise influence. Power, therefore, lies in having exclusive access to resources in a variety of political contingencies, preferably through weak ties which are more open to

manipulation. Through an analysis of the social networks of the councillors and how these are activated in local politics, I will now look in more detail at political activity in Bridgeham in order to show how some individuals operate as brokers and therefore achieve personal power through council membership.

(a) The councillors' networks

(i) Relationships with the locality

The content of the ego-centred network of each councillor was outlined above (see p. 181), where it was made clear that several respondents maintain close links over large geographical distances, whilst others are more Bridgeham-centred. The greatest variety of local ties comes from the area of residence, giving each councillor a unique set of neighbours. However, many of these neighbours were also known to other councillors as friends or acquaintances and the only virtually complete separation was in Ernest Nelson's neighbourhood set, which he said included everyone on Willey Flatts. Apart from him, only Albert Marshall mentioned anyone on the council estate and they were two acquaintances. Rather than taking Nelson's response at face value as implying a much larger network of neighbours than the other councillors', I would interpret his comments as demonstrating the density of the Willey Flatts network compared with those in the new housing areas. Two councillors have kin in Bridgeham and three have affines, but the addition of these did not seem to expand their total local networks greatly.

(see Appendix)

After the initial interviews I took the names of all the people mentioned (kin, friends, etc.) who were resident in Bridgeham - a total of 87 - and put them on cards which each councillor then sorted into piles according to whether they knew them or not. Table 15 shows the results of both the network interview and the card-sorting exercise for the seven councillors it was administered to. The most recent resident, Barbara White, named the

highest number of local contacts. Excluding Ernest Nelson because of his innumerable neighbours ('all' the council tenants), the longest-standing residents, Bradley and Marshall, named the smallest number. This seems to imply either that recent in-comers maintain relations with a wider circle of contacts, which may later be reduced to fewer, more effective links after long residence, or that the more recent in-migrants may indeed have tried to name everyone they knew, but that this was an impossible task for those who had been in Bridgeham many years.

Table 15. The Local Networks of Councillors.

Name	Years of Residence in Bridgeham	Number of Local Links Mentioned	Number Known of 87	% of 87 Known
Albert Marshall	33	11	44	51
Ernest Nelson	29	9+	53	61
John Bradley	25	10	40	46
Margaret Brown	15	13	46	53
Richard Waite	9	15	53	61
Lawrence Hart	4	18	34	39
Barbara White	3	22	42	48

With regard to the sorting of the 87 cards with these named by all seven together, Hart said himself that he feels physically and socially on the fringe of Bridgeham and does not know as many people as the rest of the Parish Council; apart from him there is a range of only 12 in the totals known. This could mean that there is an optimum number of acquaintances around which everyone's network will tend to cluster, but when compared with the different lengths of residence, ranging from three to thirty years, I feel the figures indicate limitations in methodology, rather than objective facts about the networks.

The interesting points to emerge from this information were to do with the total Parish Council network, rather than the links of individual members. Again, the total of 87 is clearly of dubious validity - I knew from my own participant observation in the town that many of the people known by councillors were not mentioned - but if we admit that these 87 were selected in some way from the respondents' networks then some relevant comments about them can still be made. Of the 87 mentioned who lived in Bridgeham only 15 (18%) were known only to the respondent who named them, whilst 24 (28%) were known to some degree by all seven. (The 24 comprised six spouses of council members; six people with businesses in the High Street; the vicar, his wife and the Parish Worker; the clerk to the Council and the representative of the Weigh and Tolls Committee; two District Councillors, one for a Stockton ward, and four life-long residents. The last person was known as a member of the Civic Society committee, to which several of the others also belonged). Four of the seven councillors knew more than 50% of the total network. This overlap of acquaintanceship seems remarkably high, and must to some extent be explained by the councillors' common membership of other associations. There is, therefore, a large core of people known to all or several Parish Councillors and a smaller number known only to one councillor for various reasons, particularly neighbourhood (everyone had some neighbours none of the others knew). Beyond this, there is a large number of people none of the councillors named, but this total, I would contend, is not at all as great as these figures would suggest. The survey showed that 53% of respondents knew at least one of their Parish Councillors and many knew several. Whilst it must be true that the councillors, simply through the press reports, are known by more people in the locality than they themselves know personally, it is clear that through both area of residence and voluntary organizational membership there are multiple links between the councillors and much of the population.

Beyond Bridgeham itself the most significant network ties of the councillors are those which Margaret Brown, Ernest Nelson and Lawrence Hart have with the councillors and local government officers they know elsewhere. Those of Hart are an important source of information since through attending local government meetings he becomes aware of the policies and strategies adopted by other councils. These links are not, however, channels through which influence can be exerted, because he attends these meetings in his capacity as a press reporter only. Hart's association with the press is nevertheless a means of influence in another sense: he is not in a position to argue the case of Bridgeham in particular, but he is a senior reporter and occasionally writes articles based largely on his own views, which through the large sales of his paper are disseminated widely. Ernest Nelson's Labour Party contacts are also chiefly useful as sources of information. As a party official he can exert some influence in policy matters, particularly in cases where his own District Councillors take an opposing view. Margaret Brown's links to the District and County Council are based almost entirely on her role as a District Councillor for Bridgeham and are thus of key importance to the Parish Council both as sources of information and means of exerting pressure to influence decisions. She has rights to speak in certain meetings and has ready-made access to the other councillors and all the officers. The offices of the District Councillor would be officially available to the Parish Council even if she were not a member of both bodies, but having a District Councillor among their number gives the Parish Council the advantage of regular contact with the affairs of the higher authority and create a direct tie, rather than the use of a District Councillor as an official channel only, as would otherwise be the case. The ^{other} District Councillor for the area, who is also the County Councillor

is rarely used by the Parish Council as a point of contact. Apart from these three councillors with contacts outside Bridgeham, the almost total lack of any political content in the network relationships (by the definition of influencing decisions) was remarkable. Four of the councillors belonged to local branches of political parties, but they did not describe any of their network links as deriving from this source. It seems that their political activity is only a small part of the social life of the councillors and that even this tends to be compartmentalised into certain relationships and at certain times. Above all, political activity is very local and does not in general influence the contact they have with people outside the community.

(ii). The Intra-group relations of the councillors.

The relations between the individual members of the Parish Council are very much influenced by two factors - the external network of each and their membership of voluntary organizations. The external network, that is, the number and quality of links outside the council, affects the degree of dependency of the councillors on each other for efficient functioning. For example, when councillors are approached by members of the public about local affairs, some will have sufficient knowledge or relevant links to answer queries immediately; others will have to refer the problem to another member or the council meeting. The frequency with which councillors are approached in turn depends on their network - how well known they are as councillors and whether the people who know them also know any other councillors. Each member has a unique external network to which he or she may at some time serve as a communication channel for Parish Council business through his or her personal ties, but some of these external networks are of greater value in terms of potential influence than others.

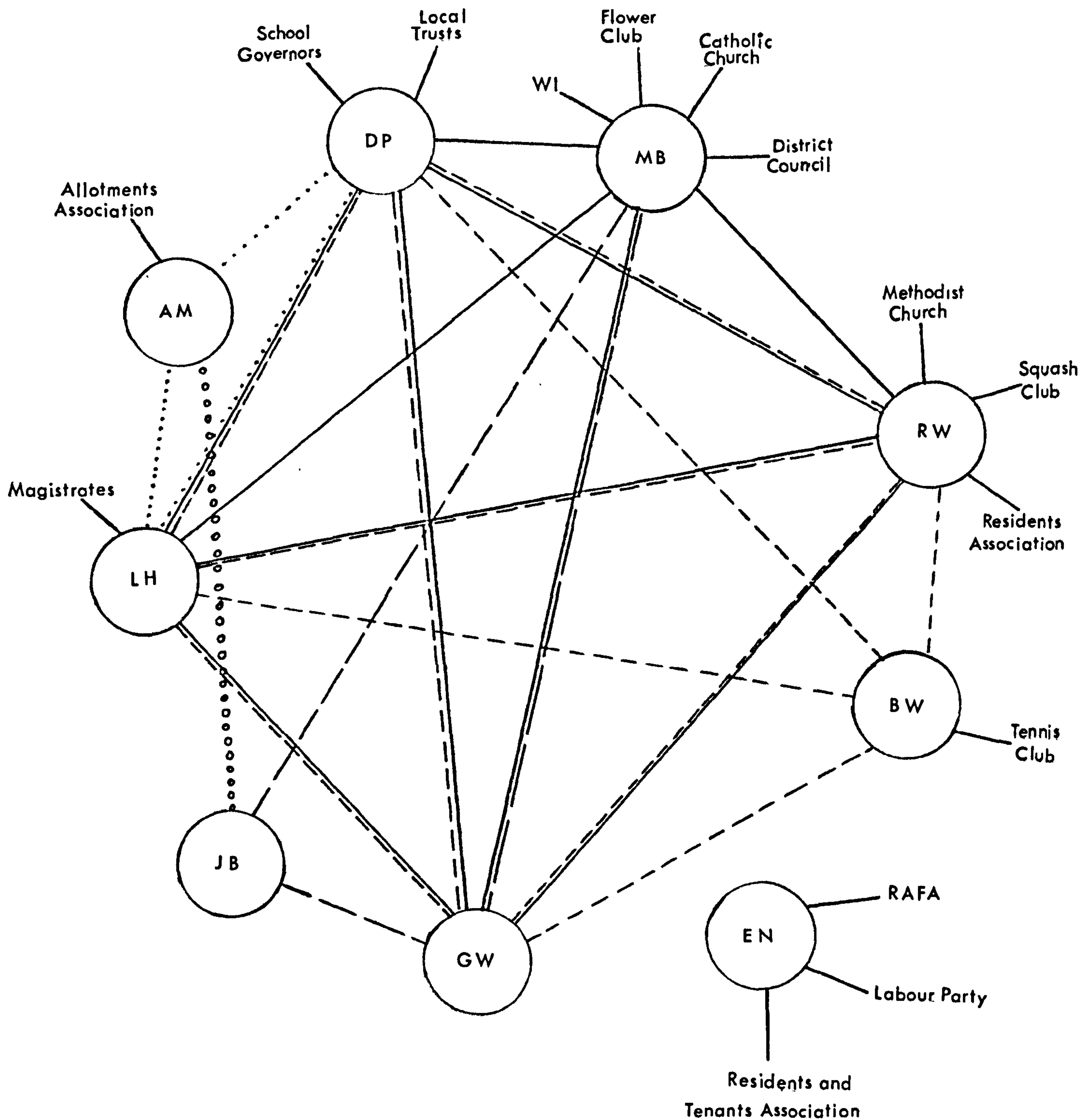
The external links of Brown and Nelson, mentioned above are particularly important here. Any councillor can, of course, approach both District and County Councillors and Officers as an elector, but any further claim to attention, such as a network link, can be invaluable in influencing decisions. Apart from these two, other councillors wishing to approach a higher authority usually use Margaret Brown as a link, or get the Parish Council as a body to take up their point. The networks within Bridgeham itself are also very significant in dealing with local problems. Nelson, Bradley, Marshall and Patterson have the most links within the town and tend to be used as sources of information and means of exerting influence by the councillors who are less well connected locally. Thus, the networks of other councillors are a resource which may be tapped at second hand by the members, and in this way the variety of personal networks increases their interdependence.

Apart from council business, however, the separateness of the councillors social lives was remarkable. Richard Waite and Barbara White and their spouses have a friendship link between them, but this was not activated very frequently and then often by a third party, for example they may find themselves together at another person's house. Waite's and Woods' wives used to be in close contact, but this ended some time ago and I could not establish a reason. Otherwise none of the councillors see each other at all except by chance or at various kinds of meetings, either Parish Council, other associations or at church. All but Ernest Nelson, however, do attend the same kind of social gatherings. The separateness of the councillors' networks was emphasized by their lack of knowledge of each other. As has already been stated, none could tell me for certain what George Woods' job was, and this was not the only example: some councillors assumed that certain others had strong dyadic relationships, asserting, for example, that they often had a

drink together, but I found this to be completely untrue; and Margaret Brown did not know until I told her that Richard Waite had three children. Also, they seemed to know very little about each other's life histories, particularly about when they came to Bridgeham: most only knew with any accuracy when those who came after themselves had arrived - those already there were taken to be old residents in most cases. Even where contact beyond the official meetings was necessary for the conduct of parish business this tended to be by telephone; calling on each other was rare.

As shown in the diagram (see Figure 10), co-membership of voluntary organizations generates a considerable number of links between the Parish Councillors. Barnes has pointed out that "The interpersonal links that arise out of common group membership are as much a part of the total social network as are those that link persons in different groups, and an analysis of action in these terms of a network should reveal, among other things, the boundaries and internal structure of groups" (Barnes, 1968, p.109). This common membership does not necessarily imply the existence of multiplex social relationships. For although co-membership makes contact between some of the councillors more frequent than others, these relationships seem to be limited to the structured situations of committee meetings. Nevertheless, it is important not to underestimate the intangible products of such network ties. Similar interests and activities are likely to result in transference of values between those linked, even in formal situations, and this produces shared opinions which affect the internal operation of the body. Importantly, the diagram also emphasises the separation of Ernest Nelson's network from those of the other councillors.

Figure 10. Formal Association Links of the Councillors, Internal and External



Types of Internal Links

- Civic Society Committee
- Conservative Association
- - - - P.T.A.
- Parochial Church Council
- Kinship

(b) The councillors' access to resources

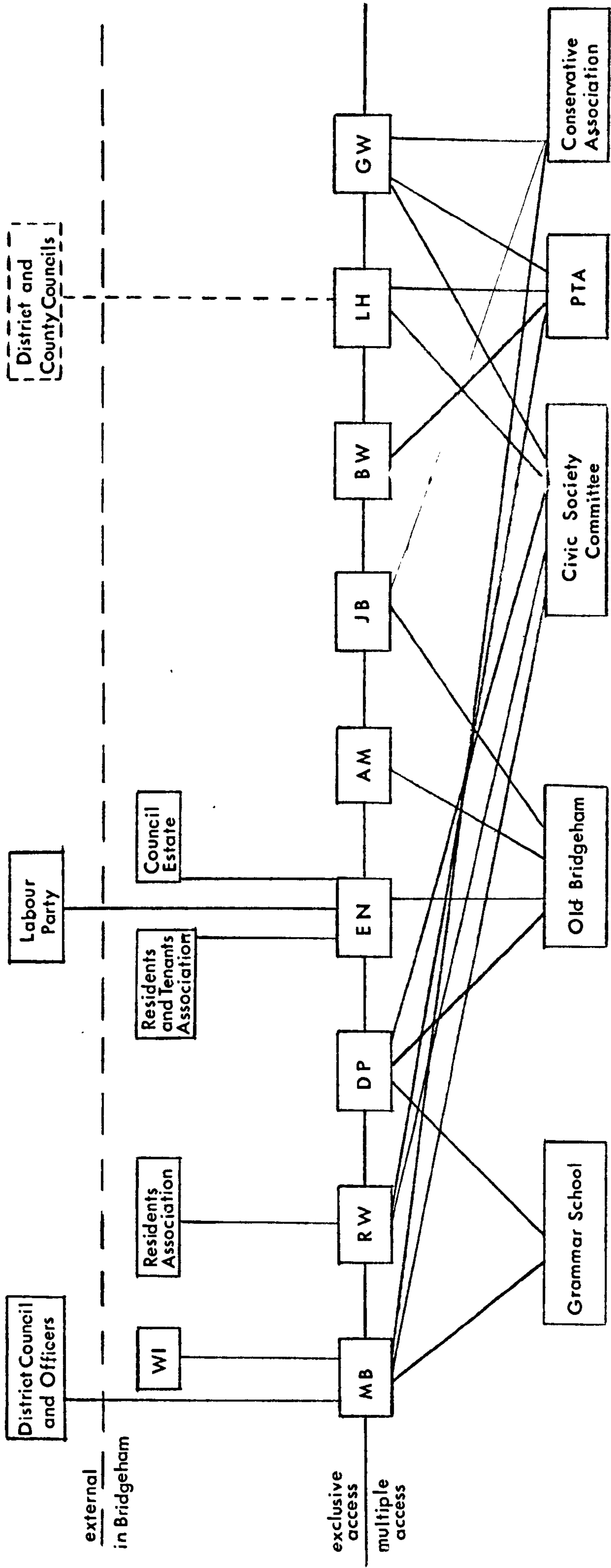
In considering Parish Council business network resources must be defined in terms of access both to means of influencing decisions and to gaining information. Taken as a whole the Parish Council commands considerable resources through the breadth of the neighbourhood and associational ties of its members: all these contacts provide access to information on which the council depends for its control of public affairs. There are also several channels of potential influence between the Parish Council and external bodies. Although this high level of resources increases the council's corporate ability to mediate, when we look at the actual distribution of resources considerable variation appears between the individual councillors. All the councillors have a unique set of kin, friends and neighbours, but otherwise there is considerable overlap between the local components of most of their networks. All belong to local voluntary associations, but again, few councillors are the sole means of access to any of these. Outside the locality, however, access to resources is much more differentiated between the various councillors.

Turning to the strength of ties, it was clear from my interviewing that for most councillors (excluding only the three with close kin in the parish) the great majority of their local network contacts are weak: they are only activated irregularly and little time is invested in the relationships. Each councillor has a small number of strong ties with close friends, but all the ties mentioned in connection with Parish Council work or voluntary association activity - including those among the councillors themselves - were extremely weak, being based largely on formal contacts. Neighbourhood links, too, were mostly weak. The political network, then, comprises mainly weak ties. To follow Granovetter's suggestion and divide

the weak from the strong ties in each councillor's network would result overall in a local/non-local division, since the ties involving emotional intensity, for example with kin and old friends, are largely located outside the parish due to the residential mobility of the councillors. What is important, rather, is to extract from this mass of weak ties those which serve as bridges, that is, those which are the only local path between the Parish Council and areas of important resources. For it is only by such exclusive access that resources can be exploited for individual political gain. This does not imply a return to the zero-sum model in which one councillor's access to a resource automatically excludes the others; multiple access can exist (as it does for example between the Parish Council and the Civic Society), but this tends to prevent the manipulation upon which individual exploitation of resources depends.

Figure 11 shows the network links which form the important resources of the individual councillors (only those known to be associated with public affairs, information or support are included). Apart from the links with 'Old Bridgeham' (by which I mean the long-standing residents) and with the council estate, both of which include a minority of strong connections, these are all weak ties. What is clear from the diagram, and from what has been said throughout the foregoing account of the councillors, is that the degree of overlap of networks is remarkably high and there are therefore few areas in which the councillors' connections are serving as bridges. In most cases there are several members linked to each area of secondary resources, so although this means there is a high level of resources available to the council as a body, these cannot be seen as a political resource for brokerage since the multiple links prevent manipulation. It is only where access is through bridging links that resources become political capital open to manipulation by a broker.

Figure 11. Councillors access to important resources



Where voluntary association links are also bridges they may be instrumental for individual councillors as a means of gaining support, particularly when they are unsure of the reception of their ideas in the Parish Council. Ernest Nelson, for example, can present a much stronger case if he introduces an issue as having the backing of the Residents and Tenants Association than if he argues merely from his own opinions (even though he may have suggested that the association take the matter up in the first place). Similarly, Margaret Brown gave a talk to the W.I. on the new structure of local government just before the 1976 District Council elections. Nelson derided this - to me - as 'electioneering', but had he been standing himself he would no doubt have used his available links in a similar fashion (although in his case the predominance of strong over weak ties in his network might have led him to favour a door-to-door approach, rather than using the weak ties of voluntary organization membership). Thus, Margaret Brown told me that Nelson was elected because he 'got his residents association to vote for him'.¹

To look at the networks in this way is in some ways a reversal of the earlier analysis, which emphasised the inter-connectedness of the councillors' voluntary association membership (see p.247). This, however, is not a contradiction, for in moving from the group to the individual as the political operator, different network characteristics are seen to be important. To the council as a body density is favourable for the accumulation of credit, yet it is separation, bridging and weak ties which allow individual manipulation.

1. In terms of economic innovation, Merton points out the difficulty of distinguishing between "business-like strivings this side of the mores and sharp practices beyond the mores" (Merton, op. cit., p.141) and suggests that what one does oneself will be seen as 'striving', whereas what others do is more likely to be interpreted as 'sharp practice'. The same could be said of the flexible use of norms in local politics.

In these terms, two of the councillors stand out as having more important areas of exclusive access to resources than the others. Firstly, Margaret Brown, because of her contact with the District Councillors and officers who form one of the parties between whom the mediation takes place; and secondly, Ernest Nelson, with his links to the Labour Party and also to the council estate residents and Residents and Tenants Association. Only two other councillors serve as bridges to networks of any political importance: Richard Waite, who remains linked to the Spitalfields Residents Association, a body whose activities have markedly declined recently, and Lawrence Hart, whose links with the District and County Councils are important, but highly constrained by his status as a journalist.

In Murphy's terms, the common goals and overlap of associational membership provide the security and normative order of the council as a body. Within these areas of common identity, however, small portions of uniqueness in their resources allow the councillors to act as individuals and follow their particular interests. Through the dialectical struggle councillors seek to reconcile the goals of the group with their personal interests, and the corporate decision-making procedures with their own wish for power. One solution to the individual's dilemma would be to work diligently in the council for so many years that one's superior experience would always be deferred to. If he had chosen to exert his influence, David Patterson was in this potentially powerful position in 1975, but only after 26 years' service. Another avenue to personal power, which will be explored here, is that of brokerage. Margaret Brown and Ernest Nelson have already been singled out for attention as the only two members of the Parish Council who are both willing and able to manipulate for political profit and also as competitors in the internal power struggle. I will now pursue the analysis by focussing on these two as brokers, looking in particular at how

they relate niche (network position) to assets (first and second order resources), what use they make of weak and strong ties, the profits they are seeking and how their activities impinge on each other.

4. Brokers in the Council

(a.) Two Brokers

To simplify the presentation and avoid too much repetition, I have summarised the characteristics of the niches, assets and restrictions of the two brokers within the Parish Council in Table 16. The boundaries between niche and assets are not always clear-cut, since assets are created from the resources of the niche. Also, characteristics which are seen in some instances, or by some people, as assets may in other circumstances act as restrictions; this is particularly true of political party membership,

Having said that both Brown and Nelson are willing and able to manipulate for profit in the political arena and that both serve as bridges to political resources, there are still further variables involved in the way each operates the brokerage role. In manipulation Margaret Brown has a good deal more scope than Nelson because she controls more, and more important, information through her exclusive access to the District Council. Moreover, her sense of political timing is extremely acute and she uses her chairmanship of the Parish Council to maximum effect in manipulating issues into and out of the public arena, guiding them into different channels and presenting information to both the Parish Council and the District Council in the way which will best further her own long-term aims. Nelson, on the other hand, could be seen at several Parish Council meetings to have a poor sense of timing, so that his attempted manipulation sometimes failed and he lost control of his political capital. This was exemplified by his insistence on discussions which the other councillors clearly did not want at that particular time and by his tendency to raise issues at inopportune moments; if he was outnumbered

on such occasions he lost face in the council and also gave other councillors the opportunity to take up the same issue at a more apt moment, thereby gaining at his expense.

Table 16. Niches, Assets and Restrictions of the Two Brokers

		Margaret Brown	Ernest Nelson
niche (network location)		no local kin; few strong ties locally; D.C. and D.Pl. Committee; lives in old town centre	local kin, affines and old friends; constituency Labour Party; lives on edge of council estate.
assets	1st order resources	educated; articulate ;tough; high belief in political competence; residential mobility; wide experience; well known as chairman of PC, DC.	hard-working; ideological commitment; local knowledge; high belief in political competence long residence. Well known by old residents and council tenants.
	2nd order resources	access to DC and offices; married to chairman of Civic Society; several associations.	Labour Party; residents association; ties through long residence.
local cultural restrictions		Conservative; "outsider"; "middle class".	Labour Party; "working class" access to DC only through non-Bridgeham councillors.

PC - Parish Council

DC - District Council/District Councillor.

In the creation and servicing of their network ties, too, the two brokers have a contrasting approach. Margaret Brown relies on her availability to the electorate. People frequently ring her up or call at her house (this was not merely her claim, but was something I observed myself) and she makes every effort to deal with their complaints. Similarly, her attendance at many voluntary association meetings and public functions serves to increase her approachability. Nelson, on the other hand, seeks out informal contacts

by visiting homes and pubs and also explicitly talks over issues which he feels the Parish Council ought to take up, rather than merely waiting until affairs are brought to his notice. In this way he uses his network links as a sounding board for ideas of his own. In distinguishing 'local influentials' from 'cosmopolitan influentials', Merton specifically points to the different types of network each tries to build up: "The local influential is typically concerned with knowing as many people as possible. He is a quantivist in the sphere of social contacts", whereas "cosmopolitans are more selective in their choice of friends and acquaintances . . . the cosmopolitans are qualitivists in this regard. It is not how many people they know but the kind of people they know that counts" (Merton, op. cit., p. 450). This differentiation was well substantiated by the contrasting networks of Brown and Nelson. Although making herself available to all types of people, Margaret Brown was highly selective in those residents she named as friends and all these were of similar socio-economic status to herself.¹ I have already said that Nelson claimed to know all the council estate residents, and he also places great emphasis on the intensity of his links and his detailed knowledge of whole families. This qualitative difference was highlighted when the councillors were sorting the network contacts under the various headings: Nelson used the 'know well' category much more frequently than did Brown (he placed 85% of those he knew under 'know well', whereas only 54% of Brown's contacts were put under this heading). This

1. It is interesting to note, however, that at a meeting of the District Development Committee I attended Margaret Brown claimed to know 'all 200' people who had attended a public meeting in Bridgeham. This implies that in the larger District arena all the councillors wish to appear 'localist' in terms of having extensive networks of strong ties in their own localities.

factor, combined with observation of numerous interactions between the two councillors and their local contacts leads me to suggest a further contrast in the way they operate their networks: Nelson attributes importance to strong ties, deliberately seeking to strengthen his existing links and claiming more intensity than may actually exist in many of his inter-personal relationships (this latter contention is supported by the fact several people Nelson claimed to know well saw him merely as an acquaintance). Margaret Brown, by contrast, seeks to keep her local ties on a formal basis (either through voluntary organizational contact or in a councillor-electoral framework) and therefore weak, and she similarly exaggerates the superficiality of her knowledge of the local population. But Brown does, as Granovetter suggests, have access to a much broader range of opinion, for her weak ties allow ideas to cross the undoubted social barriers between her and much of the electorate; whereas Nelson is more encapsulated within a dense network of strong ties.

I do not mean to suggest that this factor demonstrates a conscious awareness on the part of the brokers of the comparative political usefulness of strong or weak ties such as Granovetter's analysis shows, although these two are certainly a good deal more self-aware in their political manoeuvrings than any of the other councillors. I would attribute it rather to the images they each hold of their position in the locality and in the council and to their concepts of the sources of their political influence. Margaret Brown, although stressing her availability to the electorate and the frequency with which people make use of this, seeks recognition primarily as a powerful District Councillor and feels her greatest strength in achieving this goal lies in her contacts with external authorities and ability to exploit these. She is, moreover, fully aware of the fact that formal, weak ties can be more easily manipulated and used as resources than can strong ties where mutual

obligations are involved. Nelson's first interest, however, is in the parish and he prides himself on his grass-roots knowledge of the local population, particularly the council tenants whom none of the other councillors know well, and feels his aims are best achieved by the strengthening of his links and the creation of obligations.

A final and related difference lies in the profits which motivate the two brokers. Both are to a certain extent playing the political game by striving to increase their own power in competition with the other and to achieve public recognition of this. (To a lesser extent there is also competition with the other councillors, but this is more episodic and varies according to the issues at stake, whereas the competition between Brown and Nelson is long-term). Beyond this, Brown seeks to achieve influence in the District Council, further the aims of the Civic Society and promote conservation in Bridgeham, whereas Nelson wishes to exercise a socialist influence and increase services and amenities; he is not against conservation as such, but he is antipathetic towards the Civic Society as a 'middle-class' body. The element of competition between the two brokers - who may be seen as being at opposite ends of the spectrum within the Parish Council in terms of both style and motivation - is thus clearly evident, and the activities of each constantly impinge on the way the other operates, highlighting the conflict of individuals brought together only by common membership of a group.

The Parish Council as a body concerns itself with a broad range of interests, whereas Brown and Nelson have more specific objectives and political motivations. There is, therefore, conflict between each of them and the corporate body and between them as individuals. But there is a further dimension to the conflict. Since both are politicians with power delegated

by the electorate, both must take account of public opinion. The major interests of each - conservation and services - are also those of a large proportion of the electorate and so neither can entirely gainsay the objectives the other is pursuing. Hence Brown and Nelson must seek to balance services and conservation in such a way as to gain recognition of their interest in both types of issue, both from the public and the rest of the Parish Council. And in establishing this balance a certain interdependence may be seen between Brown and Nelson, whereby each to some extent benefits from the activities of the other. There is, in fact, some complementarity between the niches, assets, restrictions and motivations of these two brokers and in this context I feel Bax's distinction between the broker and the broker's broker can be used to good effect.

(b.) The broker and the broker's broker

(i) The leader as broker

Margaret Brown's ability to influence decision making both within and outside Bridgeham is considerably greater than that of any other Parish Council member. She has greater first and second order resources, more important exclusive access than the others and most of her links are weak and therefore manipulable. Margaret Brown is by far the best-known Parish Councillor in Bridgeham. When asked whether they knew anyone on the Parish Council, 37% of the random sample respondents named her; the next best-known was David Patterson, mentioned by only 17%. And as District Councillor she is more than three times as well known as the other representative for Bridgeham. Her superior influence, however, is not merely a product of the combination of roles of chairman and District Councillor; since the war at least one of the Rural District Councillors has always been on the Parish Council as well and apparently never achieved such influence. Clearly,

Margaret Brown has established suitable network links for her political purposes. Yet the main difference between her and other councillors, past and present, is not the mere creation of widespread links of different types, some giving access to influence, others to information and support, but her skilful use of these and particularly her ability to choose which of her many resources to put into operation in different contingencies.

Margaret Brown is by her own definition 'a politician', which, following Easton, I interpret as meaning that she seeks to influence the binding decisions which affect Bridgeham, wherever they are made. For political ends she is prepared to create and manipulate contacts which will increase her power over the decision-making process. She is aware that this often makes her unpopular and that some of the councillors feel the scheming is often unnecessary. But most people (councillors and general public alike) admit she works very hard for the locality and the majority agree with her main objectives and achievements, if not with her style. In many ways she reflects Bailey's portrait of a political leader: "Leadership is an enterprise. To be successful as a leader is to gain access to more resources than one's opponents and to use them with greater skill" (Bailey, 1969, p.36). Although the political arenas of Stockton District and Bridgeham Parish Councils are not the scene of such violent clashes and overt partisanship as villages in India, the exactness with which Margaret Brown fits into Bailey's description emphasises the high degree to which she is a politician while the other Parish Councillors waver between the roles of supporters and opposition, with no durable commitment to either camp. Bailey writes that "The skill required is a thorough knowledge of and ability to apply the pragmatic roles through which other people's resources can be tapped and through which these resources can be converted into a political following" (*ibid.*, p.76). She uses bluff, \ services her links, knows the costs and benefits of every relationship and is successful in the political game.

Because the scope for leadership in Bridgeham is limited by an encapsulating external authority, however, Margaret Brown has developed what I have described as a brokerage interpretation of her official mediatory role. Previous Rural District Councillors seem to have functioned largely as go-betweens, simply relaying information from one body to the other. But Margaret Brown is involved in a political enterprise in which she innovates and manipulates for profit; all the information she receives in one meeting is therefore potential political capital in another. She is building up credit in her brokerage career, which she can store for use in future political contingencies.

Because of her brokerage abilities Margaret Brown wields the greatest power in the Parish Council. She is approached directly by residents from all parts of the town and of all political persuasions because she has established both her networks and reputation. But despite her undoubted competence and achievements, even within such a small population there is scope for subsidiary leadership in the council. This is where the variability of assets and restrictions mentioned above come into play. Some people object to Margaret Brown's party political affiliations, some feel she is an outsider intruding into local affairs, and still others prefer to take their problems to a councillor they know personally. In this context Nelson, Patterson and to some extent Bradley and Marshall can be seen as intermediary leaders, enabling the Parish Council to spread its links to a wider network than Margaret Brown's own. There is opportunity in this situation for the accumulation of capital by these subsidiary leaders, but in general most of the other councillors are not interested in personal political gains (though it is possible that such ambitions may develop in the future) and where they do manipulate their networks it is to solve public problems, rather than to increase their own power. There is, of course,

the accumulation of credit in terms of competence and enhanced reputation, particularly in the case of Patterson, but again this is rarely used for personal advancement. Margaret Brown sees the leadership role as one of guiding and educating the public, the others are more concerned to reflect current opinion and take up local demands, except when their particular interests are at stake.

But one other councillor, Nelson, has been shown to operate with a profit motive, and since he is also in the position of subsidiary leader or intermediary I will look at his activity as being that of the broker's broker.

(ii) The broker's broker

Nelson can be seen to mediate between the council tenants and the residents association (the sections of the population to which he has exclusive access) and the Parish Council. He presents the former's views to the latter and in achieving advantages for the council estate in terms of amenities he gains profit for himself in the form of recognition of his competence, which is political credit. In this sense, Nelson is a broker. When he acts as a subsidiary leader to Margaret Brown, however, Nelson may be defined as a 'broker's broker', although my use of this term is not altogether that of Bax's original model.

Bax sees the Irish Member of Parliament (TD) as being in control of the broker's broker and says the latter will bring as many problems as possible straight to his 'boss'. Furthermore, the local terms used for these people are 'henchmen' or 'touts' (after the bookmakers' helpers who try to sell tickets at the races). Thus, the Irish broker's brokers are

working primarily for the credit of their bosses, their own profits being creamed off on the side. Also, in Bax's analysis the broker's broker is completely dependent on the broker for access to first order resources and on the broker's communication channels with higher authorities; in other words, the broker's broker's sole source of power is his relationship with the broker. As we have seen, Nelson is in no way working for Margaret Brown, or entirely dependent on her mediation, since he has his own, albeit inferior, access to external resources. He does not operate to build up her credit, as does the Irish local politician, but is more in a position of competition with her, for in most situations their accumulation of credit is inversely related. Thus, Nelson will never serve as Brown's 'buffer' or 'scapegoat', as Bax suggests, since her failures may be a source of credit to him. But if the conflict of goals prevents him from consciously operating as Brown's broker, it does not, I argue, disallow the fact that Brown uses Nelson as her subsidiary broker. Hence although the broker's broker role is much less publicly recognised in Bridgeham than in Ireland, it can still be seen to be an important aspect of local political activity. Margaret Brown is a more sophisticated politician than Nelson in terms of awareness of how the system works. She is therefore more cognisant than Nelson of the political gains for both the broker and the broker's broker in a situation of interdependence and of the fact that she, at least, is using him to increase her access to resources.

For Brown is very conscious of the constraining effects which her status as a high income, conservative in-comer to the area imposes on her ability to accumulate credit. Bax states that

"In his own area . . . he (the broker's broker) has many advantages over the TD. He knows more about all the local problems, cleavages and small issues than his boss. He is more familiar with local influential persons, and in many respects has

closer contact with them" (Bax, 1976, p.187).

This is where I believe Nelson fits closely into the characterisation of the broker's broker. In the case of Bridgeham it is not the size of the area which prevents Margaret Brown from being in close contact with the entire electorate, but the restrictions of her niche: the largely low-income and local people of the council estate and the residents association are those with whom she has most difficulty in communicating, since they are the ones who most often (though not invariably) resent her as being a 'middle-class' outsider. Thus, she herself is not sufficiently familiar with the Willey Flatts population to deal adequately with their problems, whereas Ernest Nelson gives her access to this resource. It is also the case that by operating in this way - through a subsidiary broker - Margaret Brown is able to keep her links weak, rather than having to establish direct inter-personal relationships.

But the broker's broker is also a broker in his own right. As demonstrated, Nelson is indeed politically motivated, with his own ambitions in the council and the area - which, along with his ability to manipulate is what makes him and not the other councillors a broker's broker. He uses his exclusive access in the council estate and Margaret Brown's consequent dependence on him for his own political profit by manipulating the information he presents to individuals and the residents association on the one hand, and to the Parish Council on the other. Moreover, because he himself is a politician and involved in the accumulation of credit for his own use, and especially because he controls a resource on which the broker depends, the broker's broker is, as Bax suggests, also a potential threat to the local leader. At a certain point in his career the broker's broker may shift his aims and seek the leadership position for himself. Clearly, Nelson is a threat to Brown, an open competitor for power. He is not content with the

small profits he can exact by exploiting her dependency on his mediation, nor, indeed, are their aims sufficiently compatible for them to accept complete interdependence; hence, he is prepared to use alternative means of communicating with external authorities, and if he is successful he increases his credit at her expense. Yet Nelson's career has developed somewhat differently from those observed by Bax. Nelson has already sought election to the District Council, failing at least in part because of the entrenched conservatism of the area. His operation of the role of broker's broker may therefore be seen as second best, an attempt to salvage what he can from a political system in which he has little chance of achieving legitimate delegated power through election to the District Council.

Finally, since he has his own channels of communication with external authorities, which are useful in some political contingencies but not in others, an analytical description of Nelson's activity must be situationally determined. On some occasions he behaves purely as a broker, mediating directly and taking all the risks and profits of the enterprise himself; at other times, however, he depends on Margaret Brown's mediation, takes only a share of the profits and thus may be described as a broker's broker.

To illustrate several of the points I have made about the way individuals operate within the framework of the formal system I will now present some cases of strategic choice, manipulation and brokerage.

Case 4. The Parish Council had given its support to an application for planning permission to build further shops in an area behind the High Street. At a meeting to which no local representatives were invited the application was turned down. Margaret Brown was angry both at the failure of the application and at the lack of local advice taken. However, she found two very strong arguments for re-opening the case: firstly, the officers in charge had misnamed the street concerned and secondly, their reason for refusal was a lack of suitable access when in fact very large lorries make deliveries to the skinyard in the same area. She told no-one

of her planned argument until the Planning Committee met, with the result that her points were made very convincingly and no justifications had been prepared. She proposed that another meeting be held to which local representatives should be invited, and the committee voted in her favour.

This case illustrates Margaret Brown's understanding of the local political system and the way she uses the information at her disposal and her sense of timing to manipulate the formal norms to her own advantage.

Case 5. Ernest Nelson had made himself responsible on behalf of the Parish Council for improving the bridge on a footpath across some open land near the council estate. He had organised local children into helping, but in fact did most of the work himself. When he announced at the council meeting that the work was complete the clerk asked to be allowed to observe that, since his house overlooked the land, he seen how hard Ernest had worked. Nelson then pointed out that the Parish Council had agreed to pay for the bridge; the cost had proved negligible, but he asked them instead to finance a concrete base for a changing-hut on the football field (the boys would raise the rest of the money themselves). The Parish Council agreed to this at once.

Here we see a very different style of operation by an individual councillor, Nelson does a great deal of physical work himself in the parish. In this case he used the credit gained by one enterprise to start another and both he and the council gained in reputation as a result.

Case 6. A firm in the centre of Bridgeham applied for planning permission to extend its premises. This was refused on the grounds that it would block the light from adjacent housing. Some weeks later the company announced closure of its Bridgeham operations and 21 employees were threatened with redundancy. Margaret Brown then received an anonymous letter, accusing her and the Parish Council of being responsible for the closure because of their policy of favouring housing in the town centre. Since the letter was anonymous, Margaret Brown chose to ignore it; but she mentioned the letter and her reason for not responding to another member of the council. She then received a second letter, this time signed and even more vehement, accusing her and the council of spoiling the men's Christmas by the threat of redundancy. Margaret Brown knew fairly certainly the network links by which the reasons for her non-response to the anonymous letter had reached the author and she also knew the author indirectly. But rather than use her network links to approach the man, she took the letter to the District Council and got the clerk there to write to the firm concerned and make it clear that the District, not the Parish Council, was responsible for planning matters and that they should appraise their workmen of this. The matter went no further.

This case clearly demonstrates both Margaret Brown's ability to use her alternative roles to advantage and the greater manipulability of weak ties. By her strategy Margaret Brown manoeuvred an issue which might have resulted in a great loss of credit for the Parish Council - and herself as District Councillor - away from the local arena and successfully absolved the Parish Council of all responsibility. By using the formal channels of the District Council, she avoided any direct personal contact with an angry elector and kept the relationship deliberately weak. Furthermore, she pointed out to me with some relief that had the writer known the correct procedure - to write to the Parish Council clerk - it would have had to be dealt with at the council meeting, the press would have taken it up and the matter might have become a major issue. As it was, she was able to select a strategy which protected both herself and the Parish Council from adverse publicity.

Case 7. The rapid growth of Bridgeham in the late 1960's created acute pressure on school places in the town. The figures used by the authorities were felt to be too low and demands for improvement came to a head in 1971 when the P.T.A. resolved to insist that the school building programme be brought forward; they had in their own words been 'fobbed off once too often'. Two members of the P.T.A. were qualified accountants and they produced charts and graphs to show how far the Department of Education under-estimated the need for school places. The P.T.A. presented these statistics to the North Riding, who were apparently astounded and agreed to take the matter up. Meanwhile, through their chairman, the P.T.A. got the Parish Council involved, but found them rather powerless as a body. The North Riding prevaricated, saying they could not get the Minister to listen. At this point Margaret Brown was drawn into active participation. Through her Conservative Association links she began a chain of influence by exerting pressure on the local M.P., who was then Parliamentary Private Secretary to Heath, the Prime Minister. Heath managed to get the North Riding an audience with Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State for Education. Having, so to speak, got her into their network, the P.T.A. bombarded the Minister with letters, petitions and statistics, with the result that Thatcher produced the money which was supposed to have been spent for that year and a new school was begun in Bridgeham much earlier than planned.

Here we see the P.T.A. acting in a para-political fashion and using their resources, both in terms of their members' skills and their second order

network links. By making an enterprise out of mediation Margaret Brown is involved in brokerage and because it was successful she gained considerable and lasting credit with the local population due to the wide importance of the school issue. Again, we see the advantages in Margaret Brown's network niche; she has a choice of links to activate and can choose those most likely to be effective in a particular contingency; in this case the crucial channel was completely outside the local government system.

Case 8. At a Residents and Tenants Association meeting there were several complaints about the unreliability of the bus service from the council estate and Ernest Nelson promised to take the matter up in the Parish Council. At the next meeting, however, the question of the bus service was raised by another member. Nelson made a strong case, particularly about the bus at 8.50 a.m. on which the council residents relied for getting to work and school. When Margaret Brown took the matter up with the bus company she made Nelson's information central to her case.

Here we see Ernest Nelson acting as a broker's broker to Margaret Brown. Without his knowledge she would not have known of the particularly bad problem or the Willey Flatts people, so her arguments were much stronger; he, in turn, gained credit from the residents association for getting the matter investigated, despite the fact that in this case he did not initiate the discussion.

Thus, it is clear that individual politicians can and do use the formal framework of local government in order to increase their personal credit and influence in the locality. The channels for mediation are numerous and involve strategic choices in order to use the best resources in each contingency. In many situations both the norms of the group and personal relationships are manipulated for profit; whilst at other times the formal system offers the most advantageous solution. Because individuals are operating within the system to increase their own power the Parish Council as a body gains a reputation for corporate competence, which

in turn contributes to the standing of individual members.

In the case of Bridgeham, the legitimate basis of the Parish Council has been posited as an important asset for local politicians to harness for their own enterprises. I will now present some comparative material which gives further emphasis to the important part played by brokerage in the achievement of power at the local level. The case of the North Ormesby Residents Association demonstrates that an unofficial group, lacking legitimate power, can exercise considerable influence in local politics once brokerage emerges as the dynamic force behind group activity.

5. North Ormesby¹

North Ormesby is a district of the Middlesbrough conurbation. The first house was built there only in 1854 and the area still consists largely of Victorian back-to-back terraces housing working-class families who came to Middlesbrough with the development of iron and steel and engineering in the nineteenth century. The population comprises more than 80% manual workers, chiefly employed by the heavy industries nearby along the river. North Ormesby was a separate township until 1913 and although now encapsulated by Middlesbrough it remains a distinct area, bounded by two main roads, the railway and an area of waste land. It is also characterised by long residence and local marriage (24% of the survey respondents were born in North Ormesby itself and 71% originated from the South Teesside region; 44% of spouses were from the Middlesbrough area). The present population is about 5,000. It is an area of overlapping kinship and neighbourhood ties, where people work close to home and the pubs and working men's clubs are thriving centres of social activity. Several respondents commented

1. All the material presented here derives from the work of my colleague, Declan Lynch (1977). The analysis of the data and comparison of this with Bridgeham are entirely my own responsibility.

favourably on the sense of community in North Ormesby and showed pride in its neighbourliness.

In the late 1960's North Ormesby was an area of poor amenities, many of the dwellings not having been altered since they were built. By 1975 there had been some clearance of the worst property, which was replaced by council housing, and the allocation of improvement grants also helped the situation. But in general, North Ormesby is an area of inner urban decay, with a high proportion of elderly people, much derelict property, an extremely polluted industrial environment and the threat that 'revitalization' would destroy the community.

In terms of planning, the Middlesbrough authority suggested substantial redevelopment in the early 1960's, but in fact the area was left to deteriorate further until 1969 when specific proposals were put forward for demolition and revitalization. Right from the start public meetings concerning the area were well-attended (200 residents listened to the planners' proposals at a 1969 meeting). Reorganization did not greatly affect the status of North Ormesby, which, now as formerly, has no local council of its own and falls under the authority of Middlesbrough District Council. But the introduction of public participation in planning - which in Teesside preceded reorganization - invoked a notable response from the local population.

The North Ormesby Residents Association

Following the suggestions of the Skeffington Report (on public participation in planning, 1968) Teesside County Borough sought to stimulate public participation through the formation of residents groups, whereby the planners' ideas could be presented directly to local people, the latter

could voice their demands and community responsibility could be fostered. But it was not until 1973, at one of a series of public meetings in North Ormesby, that a District Councillor suggested that such a group could be formed in the neighbourhood. It was this group, the North Ormesby Residents Association (NORA) which was the focus of the study in the area.

Seven individuals were involved at the start and formed the committee or NORA. These people had all been active in trying to get things done in North Ormesby by complaining to councillors at 'ward surgeries', ringing up the offices and speaking out at public meetings. They were concerned about a variety of local issues which affected them personally: the deterioration of the environment, the sudden erection of a noisy factory near the terraces and the dumping of rubbish on a patch of waste land.

The seven original committee members comprised four women and three men, including two married couples. The men were all in skilled manual occupations, three of the women were shop assistants and the fourth a secretary; their ages ranged only from 39 to 51; five of the seven were born in North Ormesby and the other two originated elsewhere on Teesside. In other words, this was a remarkably homogeneous group, but also a fair reflection of the socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhood population, among which all the members had dense and overlapping social networks largely comprising strong ties. Yet Lynch writes that:

"During the early months of its existence the NORA committee, according to the participants themselves was disorganised and ineffective . . . They made an early attempt during the summer of 1973 to gather a substantial following from within the North Ormesby population by calling a public meeting at the community centre, but this was attended by only six people. Their attempts to get NORA on a firmer footing were unsuccessful and they had to be content with pursuing relatively minor issues such as the personal complaints of particular individuals and the problem of re-siting a post box"

(Lynch, 1977, pp.95-6).

In terms of what has been said in the analysis of power relations in Bridgeham, NORA at this time must be seen as having very little legitimacy (the committee were volunteers, not elected members, and NORA has no constitution), less competence and almost no ability to exert influence over decision making or the general public.

Late in 1973, however, four further members were recruited to the NORA committee, all of whom were already involved in public affairs through other channels. Three of these men were leading Methodists (one was the minister) and the fourth was the Church of England vicar. Both clerics had come to North Ormesby within the last five years, but the other two men had lived in North Ormesby most of their lives. Their ages ranged from 32 to 70 and apart from the ministers the others were a retired clerk and a man with wide occupational experience who was then a publicity manager. All these four were used to dealing with bureaucracy in various ways, were well-known and respected locally and three in particular were well-educated and articulate. All were concerned with the community, its physical environment and social well-being, out of a sense of public duty and social responsibility. It was one of these men (the publicity manager, Ron) became chairman of NORA, a post he was requested to fill after he distinguished himself at a public meeting by 'taking on' the councillors and local authority officials.

The committee of 11 can be seen to comprise greater variety among its membership than the original group of seven, with greater assets in terms of skills and social resources. It retained a very dense network of strong ties with the local population, but after the later four joined NORA had more access to resources outside the community through weak links. Lynch suggests the members can be divided according to the nature of their original involvement in NORA: the first seven he calls 'limited interest' participants since they became involved through discontent with developments or lack of

development which affected them personally, tried to communicate with the local authorities as individuals and failed. The other four can be seen as 'community oriented' participants, being motivated to represent local opinion to external authorities through a sense of public duty, and/or a moral obligation. Both types of participant saw an organised residents association as being a more effective means of communication than individual protests, but the former expected it to be a mouthpiece for the issues which concerned them personally, whilst the latter sought to represent a general public which was less articulate and able to deal with officials than themselves. By 1975 the notion of community interest dominated the activities of the NORA committee, which by then had developed into a pressure group for the local area.

Yet although the recruitment aspect divides the group members in this way, there are many multiplex ties among them, deriving from friendship, neighbourhood, the churches and other voluntary associations, and these are compounded by the long-residence of most of the committee. The main focus of Lynch's analysis is the social networks of the NORA committee and how these affect intra-group behaviour and the ability to exert influence. Because of network differences, he suggests, the individual members have come to play specialized roles within the group. Some have access to particular information, some to general opinion and others are able to influence group decision-making.

Lynch shows that three individuals in the NORA committee have external access which is important to the operation of the group. All three are among the community oriented members. The chairman, Ron, has regular contacts with councillors and planning officers because of his role as chairman. He is

both informed by them and also writes to or phones officials about particular issues demanding information. He uses his contacts with the local press to get advantageous publicity for NORA and he is the only member with extensive contacts both within North Ormesby and in the rest of Teesside. There are weak links open to manipulation. Through his education and occupational experience he has considerable management skills which he uses in the chairmanship and he is also an able public speaker. Because of his position the rest of the residents association committee and external officials both use him as a source of information and Lynch demonstrates that Ron has developed the middleman role into that of 'transformer', whereby he not only transmits information, but interprets it and comments on its implications for the community. Increasingly his political leadership has been accepted by the rest of the committee who look to him for guidance.

One of the other two individuals with important external contacts is the Church of England vicar who, despite short residence, has developed a close association with one of the local councillors who is particularly keen to promote public participation in North Ormesby. This is an important source of information to NORA and the social status of the vicar also enhances the group's reputation. Finally, there is a prominent local Methodist, the retired clerk, who has worked for the community's welfare over many years. He has a long record of correspondence with local councillors and is thus an important source of information about both past and present dealings with the authorities.

The rest of the committee rely largely on their extensive local networks, which allow them both to gather information and to spread news about NORA's activities and muster support for public meetings. The network

characteristics of the group members can thus be seen to be complementary, but as shown, it was not until those with external contacts and special skills (and, I would add, weak ties) joined that the residents association really began to operate effectively.

Relations with the authorities

NORA was created at the suggestion of one of the four District Councillors for the area. The policy of encouraging the establishment of local residents groups is one which has been applied particularly to working-class areas. This may be seen as a stage beyond that described by Davies as 'evangelism' (see above, p.56) in that it does aim to stimulate communication rather than merely ignoring local responses to planning proposals. It is nevertheless still based on a paternalistic view of the less articulate sections of the population and Lynch believes that both councillors and planners operated with a stereotyped image of North Ormesby as an area where residents would not be capable of organising their own response. He quotes one councillor who referred to the policy of setting up residents associations in exactly these terms: "If they can't do it for themselves then we'll have to do it for them" (ibid., p.157). One of the councillors had a more sympathetic attitude and genuinely tried to take account of local opinion. This was the woman who gave the vicar information on council affairs. Since she was an Independent in a predominantly Labour council, however, she had little power herself and was in constant disagreement with the other three local representatives.

In North Ormesby, as in Bridgeham, different perceptions of public participation can be seen to have played an important role in the way the system has operated. Both sides were clearly interested but their interpretations were at variance. The councillors and planners paid great lip

service to the notion of public involvement and the high attendance at the early public meetings demonstrates a level of interest among the North Ormesby population which, according to the evidence of other empirical studies was unusual for an area of its socio-economic characteristics. Yet it seems that the councillors envisaged the public participation machinery, and particularly the public meetings, as a means of setting out their own views, justifying their policies and 'educating' the public to their way of thinking. This meant that the residents who attempted to participate as individuals, voicing their own complaints and demands, were not a great deal better off after NORA was created. In setting up a residents association the councillors expected it to operate as a channel of communication for information flowing from them, the decision-makers, to the residents, the beneficiaries. They did not apparently foresee that the population might not be passive or co-operative, or that the residents themselves might wish to make demands and put forward alternatives.

In the early stages of its existence NORA achieved little influence. Communication was controlled by the councillors who called the public meetings or invited the committee to private consultations. One councillor in particular was skilful at manipulating these meetings, avoiding answering awkward questions and dealing curtly with vociferous objectors. Thus, the authorities contrived to retain an image of concern for the area whilst in fact they pursued their own policies in a paternalistic fashion. The existence of the residents association as a structured communication channel merely reinforced this image of consultation.

The turning point in NORA's effectiveness came with the emergence of Ron as leader. He was able to define the group's aims more clearly, co-ordinate activity, broaden the areas of concern from local to community-

wide issues and also select modes of communication which demanded the authorities' attention. Until then, NORA had operated within the rules set out by the councillors, and as a young body it was still learning these rules and was not as skilled in playing the political game as were the officials. A great deal of anger and frustration had built up in the community as people felt their views were being ignored. Ron was able to channel this energy into more productive expression and organize the discontented population into a base or support for NORA. He ignored some of the rules by by-passing the councillors and getting into direct touch with the officers to get more detailed and accurate information or by getting the councillors' attitudes towards North Ormesby adverse publicity. In other ways he made his own rules and forced the councillors to play by them, for example, by calling public meetings in NORA's name and inviting the councillors to attend, in which case refusal would have led to great loss of political credit. As NORA's status and evident influence grew the councillors became increasingly reluctant to exchange views with the committee. Thus Ron deliberately manipulated a confrontation situation between NORA and the authorities in which the strength and unity of the local response could no longer be ignored. Since then, the committee has had considerable success in influencing decision-making and getting its views acted upon. However, the threat which NORA's increased capacity for effective participation poses to the councillors' own status has increased the rift between councillors and local residents, putting the former very much on the defensive. The residents association has in fact developed in the opposite way from what the councillors envisaged initially and is now competing for influence with the councillors themselves.

NORA and the Parish Council

Clearly, in terms of socio-economic characteristics, the populations of Bridgeham and North Ormesby are in complete contrast with each other.

But in looking at political activity in Bridgeham I have taken an approach based more on organizational factors than on socio-economic categories, suggesting that the political participation of the parish is dominated by the publicly acknowledged abilities of one particular group which is able to exercise a high degree of influence. To compare the Parish Council and NORA in terms of those organizational factors which I have isolated as being important may to some extent test the validity of my analysis, although there are obviously too many contrasts in the two situations to allow a rigorous comparison; for this we would need examples of an unsuccessful political body in a middle-class area and a Parish Council in a working-class locality.

Firstly, there are several significant points of similarity between these two groups, particularly in the essentially local nature of their interests and the fact that both are non-party political in operation. Looking at the internal structure of the groups and the kinds of ties between their members and the localities, both have strong voluntary association links with the communities, both contain people from the main churches in their area and the membership of each represents a range of occupational and other skills. They therefore have a wide base of popular support and a high degree of local contact and knowledge. Furthermore, each group contains one definite leader: in the case of Bridgeham, the chairman is a long-standing member of the Parish Council and is also one of the local District Councillors. Because of her dual role she is extremely well known by local residents and also exercises much more influence on decision-making than the other Parish Council members. In the case of NORA, the chairman is a well-educated local man who has remained a resident of the area. He is important to the group in several respects, particularly as a commentator on local government policy and also as their main spokesman in public or private meetings. Both leaders are more skilled political

actors than the rest of their groups and both have a significant effect on the way the groups define problems and seek to exercise influence.

Each body also contains middlemen who act as links with other groupings in the localities. In the Parish Council, there are members who belong to all the main voluntary organizations, from the old and new parts of the town, from both the council estate and most of the new housing areas and also several are involved in school affairs. The members of the NORA committee also have multiplex links with the community. In particular, several individuals are active in the churches and the Community Centre, whilst others are members of Working Mens Clubs and Trade Unions. These middlemen roles are less formal in NORA than the Parish Council because voluntary association activity is somewhat less developed in North Ormesby than in Bridgeham. In both groups, however, the informal inter-personal network of each member assumes considerable importance as a means of gauging public opinion and mobilizing support. These groups exist specifically to be concerned with local affairs and to provide a channel of communication with higher authorities. Their strong ties with the communities are essential to their operation since in both cases neighbourhood commitment dominates the group's activities. The primary function of each body is to argue the case of its immediate locality in the face of policy formulated at a higher level and decisions made over a much wider area which may have adverse local effects.

Despite this, the two groups concerned vary considerably in their political achievements. Superficially this difference appears to be the result of the contrasting issues at stake in their localities. It could be argued that since the issues of public concern in Bridgeham were not very controversial/ (in other words, there was general acceptance of the planning policy for the town), the effectiveness of the council in a confrontation situation was never really tested. In North Ormesby, on the other hand,

there was considerable divergence between the planning policy for the area and local wishes and NORA was therefore frequently engaged in scenes of confrontation with the councillors and planners. A more important source of contrast, however, lies in the degree of legitimacy of the two bodies. Because the Parish Council is part of the local government structure it has officially recognised rights to be consulted and established means of expressing its views. NORA, on the other hand, although initially set up by the councillors, has no established access to the higher levels of the local authority and consequently always has to demand the right to be heard.

Thus, although the political aims of the two bodies are similar - both seek to mediate between the local population and external authorities to the advantage of the former - their niches, in fact, differ in a major respect. The Parish Council has ascribed legitimacy and its power is officially delegated through the ballot box, whereas NORA lacks these assets. Yet it is also true that in the system of local power relations both bodies are intermediaries, moreover, they are intermediaries which can be by-passed by direct communication between residents and officials. Each, therefore, must seek to achieve public recognition of its competence as a mediator, a political body capable of influencing decisions made outside the locality. Arising from its established status is the fact that the Parish Council also has considerable experience in dealing with local affairs and relating to the authorities, whereas NORA is still in a formative state, with an ill-defined role and little previous experience to draw upon. The importance of accumulated experience in local affairs is shown by NORA's increased effectiveness after a few years of operation.

The key importance of access to secondary resources, particularly those outside the locality, can be seen both by comparing NORA and the Parish Council and by looking at NORA in the early and later stages of its existence. The local connections of both groups at the time of the study

were very extensive; through the links of their personal networks both councillors and committee members had access to the skills, opinions and support of most sectors of their respective communities. Thus, their 'social resources' in their localities were considerable. In the case of the Parish Council, however, the majority of these links were weak ties, based largely on voluntary association membership and neighbourhood areas, in which many of the councillors were only comparatively recent residents. The NORA committee's local network by contrast, is founded almost wholly on the strong ties of kinship, affinity and life-long friendship and co-residence. Granovetter maintained that such strong ties, although creating local group cohesion would in fact inhibit community-wide co-ordination because of the absence of bridges (weak ties) between the various groups. In North Ormesby, however, there were no political groups before the creation of NORA and no other bodies were established concurrently. Thus, the community was not fragmented into separate groups each comprising a network of strong ties but lacking bridges between them, as Granovetter predicted; on the contrary, NORA was able to make good use of the wealth of strong ties to elicit community-wide support for its activities. It may be true that the use of strong ties in a political enterprise tends to inhibit manipulation and innovation, but in the case of North Ormesby there was such a high level of agreement between the NORA committee and the local residents that there was never any need to manipulate the information which flowed through the local network.

In terms of access to external resources, the contrast is more marked. The Parish Council has both established and informal access to the resources of the local authority and also to various other secondary resources, such as the local political parties and other regional branches or national organizations. In its early existence NORA had no external access at all

since it depended entirely on the local councillors for information and influence and they, as shown, were not prepared to support local activity, seeking only to proliferate their own views. With the entry of the four later members to the group external access was achieved both through the contacts these individuals brought with them - particularly those of the churches and occupational contacts - and especially by Ron's ability to create communication channels with the authorities. The vicar's link with the one sympathetic councillor was also important, though somewhat inhibited by her own precarious political position as an Independent Councillor. Only when this external access was introduced to the group did NORA's activity give rise to any meaningful political achievements.

The internal organization of the two groups, and particularly their niches and assets and ability to exploit these, can therefore be seen to be of crucial importance to their relative success in influencing decisions which affect the local population. If we look at NORA and the Parish Council as political enterprises it is evident that the former involves a great deal more innovation and risk than the latter, and yet that its profits are considerably less. The very establishment of NORA was an innovation; a councillor took a political risk, calculating that he would make a large profit in terms of public support. Clearly, he lost heavily in that NORA proved to be a mouthpiece for local discontent and later a rival to his own position as mediator. But NORA itself, lacking any official status, has depended on innovation in all its activities: both its access to resources and its ability to exert influence had to be achieved and it was only by trial and error that successful strategies were devised and its competence established.

I have interpreted much of the Parish Council's activity in terms of the brokerage roles played by individual members. Since both groups operate

the mediation role in terms of a political enterprise, selecting the courses of action most likely to achieve influence and assessing the potential gains and losses of each move, I will now turn to the question of whether brokerage also influences the operation of the NORA committee. Lynch specifically rejects such an interpretation, and it is on this point that I disagree with his analysis. He takes Boissevain's definition of a broker as "a professional manipulator of people and information who brings about communication for profit" (Boissevain, 1974, p.148) and goes on to state that

"In the case of the NORA committee, nobody acts as a broker in Boissevain's sense. This can be put down to two basic reasons: in the first place no one individual has yet built up a network of sufficient political content to be able to manipulate relations for his own ends; and secondly, no one has yet emerged in the committee with a desire to operate for personal gain" (Lynch, op. cit., p.118).

I would query Lynch's dismissal of brokerage on both grounds. Firstly, brokerage depends not upon a network of specifically political content, but on exclusive access to resources which can be put to a political use. Lynch clearly shows that the NORA chairman, Ron, has access to resources not available to any other committee members, (notably the press and other external contacts), and that he is able and willing to put these to political use (for example, in getting adverse publicity for the councillors). Furthermore, Lynch described Ron as a 'transformer' in the way he interprets information during mediation: I feel this process could equally well be termed manipulation. Secondly, Lynch's interpretation of Boissevain's 'profit' as 'personal gain' is far too narrow. He repeatedly emphasised the influence of Methodism on three of the community-oriented leaders in NORA, demonstrating

that their participation in the residents association is founded on a sense or moral duty to help the community at large and particularly those less articulate than themselves. But to dismiss a profit motive on the grounds that the political motivation is largely altruistic is, I believe, to take the economic analogy of brokerage too far. I have shown that in Bridgeham, although there is a degree of inter-personal competition for power, the notion of the public good is also an extremely important motive and for some councillors the only reward for membership is the ability to guide decisions in the way they feel is best for the town. The same is true in North Ormesby; for Ron, 'personal gain' is seeing the neighbourhood develop in the way he wants it to.

If we accept that profits may be in the form of achieving a degree of influence for local opinion in external decision-making (and possibly also in the satisfaction this engenders) then manipulation for 'his own ends' or 'personal gain' can be excluded from the definition of the broker. Moreover, as with the Parish Council, such profits are re-invested in the enterprise in the form of increased recognition of the group's competence by both the public and officials. Thus, the profits accrue to the whole NORA committee and ultimately to the local population as a body. The innovation and manipulation, however, are largely achieved by one individual, Ron. This is partly due to his superior network resources, particularly his exclusive external access, and also to his undoubted political ability. As with Margaret Brown in Bridgeham, Ron is the NORA member who can best see how to use the information at his disposal to advance his own political objectives which implies the advantage of the group and the disadvantage of the councillors, their rivals.

My argument here is two-fold. Firstly, that Ron can be seen to be operating as a broker, and the fact that the profits he seeks are to the

benefit of the public does not invalidate this interpretation. And secondly, that it was only when a broker emerged as NORA'S leader that the group began to have any political success. Just as the Parish Council depends for its influence not on its ascribed powers, which are minimal, but on its ability to exploit its niche and assets, so in the case of NORA, which had no ascribed powers at all, brokerage was a prerequisite to success. For, since NORA was competing in a game in which the rules were set by the establishment and specifically aimed to exclude the group as a political force, it was only by manipulation and innovation for specific ends - in other words brokerage - that influence could be achieved.

By 1975, indeed, the NORA committee was in the process of drawing up a constitution for itself, which would clearly give the residents association the legitimacy it lacked at first. But the ultimate political achievement of NORA, and particularly of Ron as its chairman, occurred after Lynch had completed his fieldwork study. In 1976 Ron stood as an Independent candidate for North Ormesby and was elected to the District Council. His basis of support was the residents association and his platform was the need for public opinion to be heard through representatives with immediate local involvement. I still agree with Lynch that this is not necessarily a personal gain and that Ron's activity can be seen as oriented to the public good rather than any desire for the social status attached to the role of councillor. Nevertheless, his election must be seen as the ultimate profit of his continuing brokerage activity in that he has achieved for NORA the established access to influence it lacked for so long.

In this chapter I have argued that the dynamic force behind group activity is the action of politically motivated individuals. The Parish

Council is a formal mediatory body, yet its norms are sufficiently flexible to allow individual members to innovate, manipulate and accumulate profits; that is, to operate as brokers. Brokers make use of the legitimate framework of the council and compete for power in influencing corporate decisions. Thus the group is successful in mediation because individual members are seeking to establish their own competence within the body.

Individuals differ in the respect they command from other councillors and also in their willingness and ability to manipulate for profit. But the major source of power lies in having access to exclusive resources which can be used in a variety of political contingencies, and in these terms weak network ties are more useful than strong ones since they allow of more manipulation for political purposes. Two of the councillors are operating as brokers: one has great scope because of her choice of roles and she is also a skilled political strategist who understands the system well; the other is less successful because he has access to fewer resources, but in some situations the constraints of the first broker's niche lead the second to operate as a broker's broker. In Bridgeham the legitimacy of the Parish Council is an asset to local politicians seeking power; the case of North Ormesby demonstrates that legitimacy is not essential, but that brokerage is a key source of group political success.

Within the activity of a political body, therefore, there is considerable variation of individual behaviour. Group norms and resources are interpreted and exploited by individuals seeking personal power, but the internal competition for power and the need to recognise group responsibilities create both conflict and interdependency between the individual and the group. When used as a niche for brokerage the resources of the

official body are exploited to the full, whilst the body in turn depends on individual enterprise. Thus, as Murphy suggests, it is individual activity which promotes corporate action.

CONCLUSIONS

In the conclusion to the thesis I examine the question of why brokerage has emerged recently as the dynamic force in local political activity in Bridgeham and also suggest what the role of local councils may be in a modern democracy. Firstly, however, I summarise the data presented and highlight the relationship between the various phases of the argument.

1. Summary of the argument

In the introduction I suggested that political decision making has become increasingly remote from the general population and that the introduction of public participation procedures into local government has resulted in there being two major means of political expression: the official channels of public participation and the local elected representatives.

In Chapter I, I examined the two forms of political action - participation and representation - in some detail, looking both at the theoretical arguments and at the empirical evidence on the responses to public participation in planning in Britain. Participation was held by classical theorists to be the foundation of democracy, but the practical problems of involving great numbers in decision making have prevented true participatory democracy from being enacted. The representative system of local councils, starting at the most local level, that of the parish, was the means by which democracy was traditionally practised in England, but this too has not proved entirely satisfactory. Partly due to the increased responsibilities of local councils and also to the enlarged size of constituencies, councils recently have failed to stimulate a high degree of interest or involvement in local affairs. Consequently, there has been little competition for council seats and by the late 1960's the councillors themselves no longer reflected the social characteristics of their electorates. Thus, the accountability

essential to representative democracy was lacking. Yet as local government was becoming more remote, so it was concomittantly having an increasing impact on citizens, and I argued that towards the end of the 1960's a 'climate of protest' emerged, whereby it became increasingly acceptable to adopt informal and unofficial modes of political expression, which had considerable impact on decision makers.

In response both to the decline of viable representation and to the growing force of public protest (and also possibly because local government was responsible for a major part of public expenditure and the enactment of national policy) two major changes were imposed on local government - the introduction of public participation in planning and reorganization. Planning now involves all aspects of local government, so the involvement of the public at the decision-making stage should have had far-reaching effects. In fact, due to its being superimposed on an existing system, public participation has not had a massive impact on planning procedures. The local authority is obliged only to allow the population to make its views known, there is no compulsion to alter policy to accommodate local opinion. But a more important drawback to the public participation process is clearly indicated by the empirical evidence which shows that the procedure favours the educated, articulate, high-income people who can communicate with planners on their own terms. Several case studies demonstrate the lack of effective involvement on behalf of those most threatened by planning - the slum-dwellers facing clearance of their homes - due either to the local inability to organise sustained protest or to the paternalistic attitude of planners who believe any change in such areas must be an improvement. However, one study, that by Simmie, indicates a need for local-level research rather than generalisation at community level.

Finally in Chapter I, I argued that the reorganization of 1974 failed in two respects. Due to the retention of two tiers (the County and District

Councils) and the haphazard distribution of responsibilities between these, local government was not made any more comprehensible to citizens. And due to the relegation of the third tier - the local councils which Maud advocated as an essential counter-balance to the size of local authority areas - to the position of 'optional extras', local government remained remote from most people. Although both representative and participatory channels of communication exist, therefore, neither seems to be particularly successful at the current time and neither apparently engender much political interest or local democracy.

The definitions of politics and power set out in Chapter II emphasised both the wide range of activity which can be considered as political and the fact that power may operate at any level of social interaction. I then argued that in the local context political power could be seen as the ability to influence decisions affecting the local population, whether such decisions are made within the community or elsewhere. This approach is closely related to the anthropological perspective, which emphasises locality-based research and the inter-relationships of all aspects of social life.

In reviewing the theoretical concept of brokerage I stressed the Barthian economic model and showed how the notion emerged particularly from the situation of dependency in Northern Norway. Other writers, for example Boissevain, have used the concept in conjunction with network analysis and seen the broker's niche primarily in terms of the resources he can command through his interpersonal relationships. Two cases of power brokerage were examined in detail: Blok's study of the Sicilian mafia and Bax's work on Irish politicians, both of which reiterated the mediation role of brokerage, the manipulation which allows profit-accumulation, and the fact that brokers monopolise communication between the local social group and external authorities.

Against this theoretical and empirical background, I have presented material from one small town in County Cleveland. Bridgeham was once an important port and market town, but it declined in direct relation to the industrial development of Teesside. In the last decade, however, growth has been stimulated by an influx of high-income, professional and managerial commuters who now reside in the town. A range of socio-economic characteristics is contained in the present population, and these are closely associated with the different residential areas: the old High Street, the council estate and several new developments. The division of people into local/non-local categories, however, is less marked than is generally believed in the town. Although mobile, many of the in-comers originate in the Teesside region and few people were actually born in the town. But despite the short residence span, involvement in the local area is high, as indicated by membership of local voluntary organizations and the general level of concern for the preservation of the local environment.

Nevertheless, actual political involvement was not found to be very great in Bridgeham. Although the voluntary associations undoubtedly foster local interest, I argued that only three could be described as parapolitical in that they were involved in political affairs in an on-going way. Of these, the Civic Society undoubtedly exercises considerable influence, but it concerns itself mainly with conservation of the old town. Official public participation, too, was remarkably low in view of the high socio-economic status of much of the population. I suggested that this was largely due to the current lack of contentious planning issues in Bridgeham, but on closer examination of what official participation there was, it was found to bear little relation to the evident socio-economic divisions among the population. I therefore sought an explanation for the low participation rates in the attitudes and perceptions of the local population. From this data it emerged that people in general have little understanding of local government

and therefore distrust it; where they have experience or direct, interpersonal relations with officials, they have a much greater sense of political efficacy and are therefore more likely to participate. Both from this data and from previous sections of Chapter III it clearly emerged that the Parish Council is an important body in local politics. The councillors have a high sense of political efficacy and have used the official public participation channels; they are closely involved in the three parapolitical organizations in Bridgeham and they are known by the local population and felt to be influential in local affairs. The rest of the thesis has focussed on the Parish Council, first as a body and then as a set of interacting individuals.

In Chapter IV I looked first at the position of the Parish Council in the local government hierarchy. Using Adams' terminology, I argued that the council is within the domain of the District Council and that its power is delegated by the electorate. It has very little statutory power and, moreover, it can be by-passed by the multiple alternative communication channels between the public and the District Council. Because of this I argued that the Parish Council uses its base of legitimacy to establish its competence - that is, public recognition of its ability to exert influence on decisions made elsewhere. I then examined the composition of the present Parish Council and showed that, by comparison with former councils, its membership reflects the characteristics of the local population to a great extent. The councillors have a range of occupations, different lengths of residence and interests and, importantly, live in different parts of the parish; furthermore, they make good use of the breadth of communication channels available both in the locality and with external authorities. They are therefore well-suited as a body to function as local representatives and the council contrives to exercise considerable influence. Although responsi-

bility for various aspects of council work is allocated to different members, so that areas of expertise develop, the council functions as a committee, with long discussions of issues, usually guided by the member with the most detailed knowledge or experience of the matter under consideration. Some members have built up reputations for special abilities and others have important contacts outside the council, particularly the chairman, who is also a District Councillor; but most decisions are reached by consensus and there is no factionalism within the council. Despite this, a high degree of formality was observed in the conduct of meetings. Since there were few personal ties among members and little occasion for overt disagreement this ceremonial seemed remarkable. I argued that the council, through the press, was seeking to present a public image of unity and formality and that this might suggest that individual activity and conflict were in fact taking place.

From the analysis of the council as a corporate body I moved in Chapter V to the argument that, as Murphy posits, individual competition and conflict are the dynamic element of group activity. The formal framework of the Parish Council, and particularly its basis of legitimacy, gives scope for individuals to operate as brokers. The Parish Council depends on its individual members' innovation for success in its mediatory role, whilst the pooling of ideas fosters innovation and individuals also depend on the council's corporate responsibility in building up their own enterprises. Thus, whilst the council as a body seeks recognition of its competence, there is also intra-group competition for influence over decision making and in this way profits are accumulated by individual members. But although the group and individuals are thus interdependent, the councillors vary in the degree to which they operate as brokers. This depends partly on their willingness to enter the power struggle for personal rather than public profit and on their ability to pursue political strategies. But I argue that the most

important source of variation lies in the resources different councillors bring to the enterprise. Through the linkages of their personal networks the councillors have access to secondary resources. The most important of these links are those which are bridges. Bridges form the only local path to certain resources and therefore give exclusive access; moreover, bridges are usually weak ties, which are more open to manipulation than strong ties.

Two councillors combine the willingness and ability to operate an enterprise for profit with exclusive access to political resources: Margaret Brown, the chairman and District Councillor, and Ernest Nelson, who has links with the council estate and the local Labour Party. I presented the activities of these two councillors in terms of brokerage. Margaret Brown exercises the greatest political power due to her links with the councillors and officers of the District Council, which give her access to information and also the ability to influence decisions. But her socio-economic characteristics, Conservative party politics and in-comer status create certain constraints in her brokerage niche and she is to some extent dependent on other councillors for local information and contacts. Ernest Nelson, particularly, operates as a subsidiary broker, or broker's broker, exploiting Margaret Brown's dependency for his own profit and occasionally by-passing her mediation by the use of other links.

Finally, the comparative case of the North Ormesby Residents Association showed that a legitimate basis is not a pre-requisite for the achievement of a degree of local autonomy, but that brokerage plays a key role in the ability of a mediatory body to influence decisions and achieve power. Thus, I have argued that these politically motivated individuals, both by seeking personal profits and by competing for influence, provide the dynamic force of local political activity and allow the corporate body to achieve power within the formal framework of the local government structure.

2. Brokerage and state penetration

My argument has moved from the level of the community, to that of the corporate group and finally to the individual political operators. I have shown the relationship of the group to the community to be one of representation in terms both of reflecting the socio-economic composition of the population and of taking up local problems and acting positively and I have related individual behaviour to group activity by use of Murphy's notion of the dialectical struggle engendered by group membership. From what can be determined about previous councils in Bridgeham, it seems that brokerage has only recently emerged in the Parish Council and I will now relate the activity of brokerage to the community and to changes in the wider society.

From the overview of the work of several writers concerned with brokerage it was clear that this is a phenomenon frequently associated with the impact of external forces on a local community. In the case of Northern Norway and Arctic Canada, brokerage is seen as a response to situations of economic dependency, cultural separation and the partial penetration of centralised bureaucratic institutions into peripheral areas. Whether these external authorities are offering services or seeking to exercise controls, it seems that brokerage is particularly likely to emerge where intermediaries between two such groups control access to each and exploit this position for profit. Blok's study of the mafia relates the whole evolution and persistence of mafia power to the development of the Italian state and its incomplete penetration of the periphery, and Bax demonstrates that in the Irish case the brokerage which evolved as a response to partial integration later served to perpetuate such discontinuity.

Clearly, there is no sense in which Bridgeham can be described as economically dependent or socially peripheral. The highly mobile population, mass communications and numerous local branches of national organizations testify

to the residents' involvement in the mainstream of the English way of life. Politically, however, the town is within the domain of the District and County authorities, on which it depends for services and the resolution of local problems. Thus, because of its relative size and lack of autonomy, Bridgeham may be seen as dependent in terms of the local political arena. It is therefore relevant to enquire whether the brokerage of Bridgeham Parish Councillors is related in any way to the position of the town vis-à-vis the external authorities on which it depends.

As Bax has suggested, even where state penetration is highly developed and the services of central and local government are available to all citizens by right there will still be scope for the development of expertise in dealing with bureaucracy and some people will be able to establish reputations as successful mediators. This is particularly true in the case of planning, where influence to some extent depends on expertise, and I have shown that even the Bridgeham population with high socio-economic status does not necessarily communicate well with the bureaucracy. But the Parish Council, as mediator, has such a reputation and is seen as a body which is more likely to be able to exact benefits from the external authority than are individual citizens. Furthermore, I believe that to some extent the element of brokerage incorporated in the performance of this mediation role can be seen as a response to structural changes in the external authorities.

Prior to local government reorganization, the Parish Council was the established means of communication between the local authority and the general population. As suggested above, reorganization was intended both to rationalise the structure of local government and at the same time make its hierarchy more readily comprehensible to the public, thus improving communication. Neither of these aims was actually achieved to any great extent, but it does seem that the restructuring affected the way the Bridgeham Parish Council operates; for while apparently reducing its official

status in the system or power relations, reorganization actually increased the scope for brokerage in the council's role.

Initially, the great confusion resulting from reorganization itself increased the dependency of the local population on any mediator who had an understanding of the new authorities and their structure. Since the Parish Council existed both before and during reorganization, it was able to make itself cognisant with the changes very rapidly. Two factors operated to the advantage of the official body in this period: the high level of information and assistance that the new authority put out about itself through official channels, and the prejudice of local people against reorganization due to their wish to remain in Yorkshire. The Parish Council made considerable political profit from the continuity of its role during reorganization. But at the same time, the relegation of parish councils to the position of optional extras and the introduction of public participation in such an important sphere as planning clearly threatened to reduce the importance of the mediation role of the Parish Council. However, I suggest that this served as a stimulus to the Bridgeham council to maximise its reputation as the most effective channel of communication between the local population and the new hierarchy.

But another factor which emerges from the analysis of brokerage in a variety of situations is that control of communication channels is often the broker's chief asset, allowing him to manipulate people and information almost at will, since both parties are dependent on his mediation. Yet Bridgeham exists within an environment of mass communications in which the local press, T.V. and radio are important sources of information, and there are also multiple lines or direct access between the local population and higher

authorities. Thus, there would seem to be major restrictions on the Parish Councillors scope for manipulation. The introduction of public participation served to increase the communication channels which already existed and had public participation been effective in Bridgeham, the power of the Parish Council would have been greatly reduced.

My argument here reflects that of Wolf: that brokers must operate in such a way as not to abolish their own usefulness (see above p. 100). In other words, brokers in the council must not serve to improve communication, but must, on the contrary, preserve people's dependency on their own mediation. Thus, the Parish Council does not publicise the informal methods of communication used nor the strategies involved in mediation. It is in this sense that I believe the operation of brokers affects political expression throughout the community.

Cornelius has suggested that the style of leadership can affect the political involvement of the social group:

"Leadership is one of several types of linkages between community-level and individual-level phenomena that is of particular importance in explaining the impact of residential context on political attitudes and behaviour"

(Cornelius, 1975, p.135).

The data I have presented clearly show that this is indeed the case in Bridgeham. Councillors are heavily involved in the political activity of parapolitical voluntary organizations and local people think first of the Parish Council when they wish to express their views or get problems dealt with. The competence of the council - established by the individual activities of its members - therefore moulds political behaviour in the local community.

Thus, in seeking to influence local affairs, councillors must also act in such a way as to retain control of the alternative forms of political expression. In looking at the leadership activities of 'caciques' (local leaders with political, economic and social control of geographically defined areas of Mexico City, whose power is acknowledged both by the local group

and external authorities), Cornelius argues that, as a broker, the cacique will portray himself as the only person able to obtain benefits for the local community. In the same way, the Bridgeham Parish Council stresses its legitimate basis and formal constitution as the basis of its ability to mediate to the local advantage. Although the brokers of the Parish Council are much less involved in mobilising support than the caciques of Mexico City, and are certainly not operating for their own economic advantage, I would argue that in seeking to establish their competence as mediators they are also involved in retaining the gaps in communication and channelling all political involvement through themselves by actively tapping public opinion and taking up problems brought to their notice. For, as Cornelius says,

"Perhaps the most fundamental threat to the durability of an urban cacicazgo . . . arises as the local community begins to develop a more complex set of social, economic and political relationships to its external environment and becomes more fully integrated into the physical structure of the city. The influence of the cacique in his key role as broker between his followers and the institutions of the external environment may be substantially reduced through such evolutionary change. As individual residents become more familiar with the contours of the larger urban social and political system, an increasing amount of direct nonmediated contact will occur " (ibid., p.162).

This echoes the findings of Blök and Bax and I would argue that the same is true of brokerage in Bridgeham. Because mediation is being pursued as a political enterprise by individuals within the council, the niche must be protected by preserving the lack of direct contact between the public and higher authorities. This is why brokerage has emerged since - or at least been compounded by - the introduction of public participation procedures. Councillors must now work much harder to emphasise their status as the best local channel of influence. To the external authorities the broker must emphasise the superiority of his own local knowledge (as Margaret Brown did in Case 4. above) and to the local population he must present himself as a necessary and competent mediator (as Ernest Nelson in Case 8).

Thus, brokerage does not operate in spite of the introduction of public participation, but to some extent because of it. It is public participation which has compelled brokers to be particularly active in order to maintain control of communication and a degree of power. In the reorganised system Parish Councils were expected to function as go-betweens, giving the District and County Councils a means of assessing public opinion, and conversely they were held to be a channel for the dissemination of information about the higher authorities' policies and or justifying their actions to local people. Thus, Parish Councils were envisaged as consultative or advisory bodies which would assist the efficient functioning of local government. But the very breadth of this normative role gave councils great scope in their interpretation of it, and in Bridgeham, at least, the council as a body exploited its new position through the brokerage of its members. I would therefore argue that brokerage in this case can be seen as a response to structural change, which involved greater state penetration and at the same time increasing remoteness in the location of decision-making powers. The council gained an advantage at the time of reorganization and, far from public participation making it redundant, it has achieved greater influence through the development of brokerage as a means of retaining control of local political expression.

3. The role of a local council in democracy

Finally, in concluding the thesis I will make some comments on the value of local councils to democratic political process, drawing conclusions from the data presented.

Recently, several writers on local government have put forward the idea of establishing parish councils, or their equivalent, in urban areas, where, as Maud suggested, it is felt they could fulfil a useful role in mediating

between the public and District Councils. Cox claims that

"If we wish to apply the principle of maximum feasible power for minimum feasible areas we arrive at the concept of the neighbourhood council, the common council, the urban parish council. The name hardly matters. What does is the principle - that at the level of most primary interactions, the home district, citizens should have as much of a voice, as much power to adapt local services to local circumstances and needs, as may be compatible with the claims of the wider society"

(Cox, op. cit., p.207).

I have shown that Bridgeham comprises such a home area, where the emphasis is indeed on 'primary interaction', and that in this context the Parish Council does achieve a degree of power in influencing the decisions which affect Bridgeham. But since its activities depend on politically-motivated individuals operating within the group, how easily could the success of the Bridgeham council be recreated in other areas with no tradition of a local elected representative body?

Much of the success of Bridgeham Parish Council stems from the experience of its members and its continuity amid a period of change. As a body it has contrived both to maintain close contact with an enlarged electorate and to improve its relations with the next level of authority. If new councils were set up they would undoubtedly face problems initially due to a lack of established relations and experience: their social resources would not at first fit many political contingencies. Yet another important factor contributing to the Bridgeham council's ability to influence decisions is that it has a favourable image of bureaucracy and a good understanding of how the local hierarchy operates. If the District Councils were willing to spend some time educating a new council on the processes of local government, then these advantages could easily be acquired.

The benefits of representation at this most local level are that the small scale allows for the election of a council which reflects local socio-

economic characteristics and also creates opportunities for meaningful communication between councillors and public. Moreover the existence of elected representatives prevents the politicization of the whole of social life and allows the majority to become involved only when faced with particular problems. On the other hand, formal councils provide a niche for the development of local leadership skills in which ultimate control still rests with the local population; and the introduction of public participation has increased the accountability of the elected representatives, since their power is threatened by the provision of direct communication channels.

Jane Morton suggests that "The Royal Commission was right to recognise the importance of the parish council as the primary focus of local feeling. But if it is to step into the lacuna left by the (proposed) disappearance of the rural districts it will need more than good will to be effective" (Morton, *op. cit.*, p.177). She believes that more financial autonomy might benefit local councils, whether rural parishes or urban neighbourhoods. From the Bridgeham data, however, it is clear that the important role of the Parish Council is not as a provider itself, but as a pressure group on those who hold the purse-strings. It is chiefly a transmitter of local protests and demands to the appropriate authority. As Almond and Verba discovered in their cross-national survey of five political cultures, "Institutions close enough to the individual to allow him some participation and yet close enough to the state to provide access to power, are (also) a necessary part of the democratic infrastructure" (Almond and Verba, *op. cit.*, p.197). This is an important role which a parish council is ideally suited to fulfil. Areas which have an active local council have an advantage in their administrative dealings, due to the legitimacy of elected representation. The establishment of local councils in other areas could only improve communication and increase the effectiveness of local political activity.

APPENDIX

1. The 'Cleveland Project'

The research on which the thesis is based began as part of a larger project. This project was carried out from the Department of Anthropology or the University of Durham between 1974 and 1977. The staff comprised a director and three research assistants; all were anthropologists, but were involved in this particular project for different lengths of time. The research had two broad objectives:

- i. To contribute substantively to the study of public responses and participation in relation to the processes of structure planning in the Teesside/South or Teesside region of North-East England;
- ii. To advance the theory and methodology of social network analysis in a field of research new to this type of approach.

The main theme of the study was to investigate variations in the local patterns of responses to planning in the region. In order to do this we aimed to examine how particular individuals and sets of interacting individuals defined and assessed the relevance of various strategic and local planning issues, and to explore how involvement in certain types of social networks influenced the ways in which individuals presented their views and sought legitimacy and support for them. This approach, it was hoped, would offer a means by which we could document how local people conceptualised planning problems and how they tried to influence the planning process itself.

Previous sociological studies of the responses to planned change had tended to focus on local political and community institutions, or they had analysed responses in terms of the gross variables such as rural-urban differences and socio-economic class, as described above. And much previous work had relied heavily on the questionnaire method. It was our view that

an understanding of the factors affecting public responses and participation might be better achieved through the study of interpersonal networks, so that the types of social exchanges between individuals might be more specifically identified. Networks are primarily important in this context for the flow of information and for the mobilization of support for group or individual interpretation and action. Also, since network analysis places emphasis on exploring ways in which relationships ramify across institutional, categorical or territorial boundaries, this approach moved away from conventional institutional or structural types of explanation towards a more actor-oriented model of social behaviour, which stresses the part played by social interaction in the formation of action groups and attitudes. The use of a network methodology, however, did not preclude consideration of the influence of other situational, ecological or local institutional factors in determining responses to planning.

The approach of the project comprised three detailed case studies and a random sample survey of six particular localities. The cases and localities for study were selected so as to provide a series of contrasts both in terms of the kind of planning issues involved and the type of socio-economic and ecological setting. From each of the three administrative areas outlined above two localities were included in the random sample survey, one of which was also the subject of a case study. Thus, on Teesside North Ormesby was selected for detailed study and Hemlington was included in the survey as a contrasting locality. The former is an old-established inner urban neighbourhood being affected by slum-clearance and redevelopment and inhabited largely by long residents in manual occupations. The latter is a new housing estate on the outskirts of Middlesbrough comprising both local authority and private housing. In East Cleveland the Skelton/Brotton area was chosen for

the case study and Marske for the comparative locality. The Skelton area is one of small settlements including Brotton, Boosebeck, Lingdale, North Skelton and Skelton Green, most of which were formerly mining communities. This is an area of limited development and poor facilities, and lacking any unifying focal point. Marske is a compact coastal town, functioning as a dormitory for Teesside but retaining a high degree of local identity. In West Cleveland Bridgeham was selected for the case study, providing an example of a small old town subject to recent growth. The contrast was found in Kirkham, until recently a farming hamlet, but now a residential area for high-income commuters.

The present study has grown in a very direct way from the project outlined above. Whilst working as a research assistant in Cleveland, and particularly when engaged on the case study of Bridgeham I began to feel that to try to separate planning from other aspects of political activity was not particularly relevant or revealing, at least in terms of that one locality. The same processes were involved both in responding to planning and a whole range of other local political issues. From the findings of the project, in fact, the research team concluded that the planners' definition of what constituted a public response was far too limited, excluding much activity which we demonstrated to be relevant to influencing planning decisions. Planning and responses to it are inextricably bound up in a complex of behaviour which may be seen as local political activity - which in turn, of course, is interdependent with a whole range of other factors. This was particularly true in Bridgeham where responses to planning were largely channelled through existing institutions, rather than, as was found in some of the other localities studied, new groups and procedures being established which could be seen as being directly related to the planning process. It was

also clear that local people themselves did not isolate their views on planning from those on other matters of public policy. Furthermore, planning, although a phenomenon which affects the whole of Britain, is yet peculiarly local in its procedures and effects; by broadening the focus of the study to political activity in general I therefore hoped to be able to make some statements of wider relevance than those which are dependent on a unique series of local circumstances and the policy of a single planning authority.

Most of the data presented here derives from the 12 months fieldwork I carried out when a member of the research team. Further information has been collected since during short return visits. Due to the time-table of the previous project I was not able to be present during the 1976 District and Parish Council elections in Bridgeham and I have therefore not tried to bring the 1975 data right up to date, preferring to spend the time available in attempting a more complete analysis of the existing material. Also as I have used the other case studies to provide comparisons and contrasts with Bridgeham and no further work has been done in those areas, the "anthropological present" used throughout refers to 1975.

2. Methods of data-collection

For the whole of 1975 I lived in Bridgeham, on two different housing estates. A considerable amount of data was amassed simply through this period of residence, when I participated in the life of the town to the extent of using the services such as the shops, garages, library and pubs and forming friendships and acquaintanceships among the local population. I also attended public meetings, planning exhibitions, association meetings and functions, all the Parish Council meetings and some District Council meetings. But to a great extent the social life of Western urban society is private - interaction taking place in people's homes, to which access is

by invitation. The scope for participant observation in interpersonal relations is therefore fairly restricted and it becomes necessary to resort to the formal approach or the interview in order to talk to the widest possible range of people. Wherever possible, however, interviewing was unstructured and often notes were only made afterwards.

In each of the localities selected for a case-study we began by interviewing those people who had written comments or objections to the recently published Draft Structure Plans. The names of these people were available from the planning offices. There were different numbers of commentators and letter-writers in the three localities and they were in no way a random sample. Nevertheless, it was felt that because these people had shown an interest in planning they would provide a good introduction to the areas in terms of identifying both important local issues and the individuals and groups seen to be influential in presenting local opinion to the planners. In each locality one group emerged fairly clearly as being particularly important in fulfilling this role.

We then proceeded to a detailed study of these groups, the main focus of attention being their structural and interactional characteristics. We examined the processes by which individuals organized their responses to planning through interpersonal relations; in other words, how interaction within the organized framework of a group led to the definition of important issues, the formulation of opinion and the expression of views to the authorities. These data were collected using three basic methods: intensive structured interviewing of each member of the group, observation at public meetings and at informal gatherings, and the use of secondary sources.

The in-depth interview was used as a means of obtaining an extensive life-history from each respondent. This included information on their family situation, occupational history, residential mobility and experience in local affairs. A second part of the interview attempted to obtain data on the structure and content of the individual's personal network, including kin, friends, neighbours and other regular contacts. For each network link we asked about the frequency, duration and location of contact and whether the exchange contained any discussion on local affairs. The last part of the interview gave attention to how the respondents conceptualised planning problems - how they became aware of these and their attitudes towards them. This indicated their perceptions of the public participation process and their feelings of political efficacy.

We saw it as important to supplement the interview by observing proceedings at public and informal meetings in which these individuals were involved. Note was taken of the patterns of interaction and verbal exchanges occurring both amongst the individuals themselves and between them and the authorities. This provided a means of depicting how these groups operated in particular situations and how individual members developed specific roles within the group. It also gave valuable material on how planning issues were defined and clarified, and on how strategies were devised for the best presentation of a case.

Full use was also made of a variety of secondary sources pertaining to the history of the localities, their socio-economic history and the nature of previous issues of public concern as reported in the local press and association records. Basic socio-economic data were obtained from the census and local authority records. The historical dimension was felt to be important for understanding contemporary responses to planning, as previous experience might determine the significance attached to various issues, the groups

involved and the nature of the social base from which participants were drawn.

Wherever other significant groups or quasi-groups of participants emerged, for example when a petition was circulated and presented to the authorities, these were investigated in the same way, with regard to their structural and interactional criteria, the source of the action and its eventual outcome. It was not only successful activity which was examined; where there was evidence of an attempt to influence planning decisions which had failed this was investigated as a comparative case, often indicating the reasons for the success of other groups. Throughout, one interview led to another as the names of other participants were mentioned by respondents.

Complementary to these case studies, a small-scale survey was carried out in the six localities in order to provide cross-sectional data collected from a random sample of respondents. The sample was taken by random numbers from the electoral register. Without such a survey we would not have been able to assess the representativeness of the views of the active few in each case, nor could we evaluate how unusual these might be in terms of their social characteristics. Originally, the research design aimed at completing 100 interviews in each of the six localities, but the final number fell somewhat short of this at 554, comprising between 88 and 96 in each area. Interviewing was carried out by members of the research team with some additional assistance from students. The schedule consisted of 114 questions, organized into three main sections. Interviewing time varied according to the degree of interest shown, averaging between 30 and 60 minutes. The first section of the interview was designed to obtain the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents: household composition, employment situation, education and residential

history. Other factual data were obtained, such as house- and car- ownership, use of media and membership of local voluntary organizations and churches.

The second part of the interview focussed on knowledge of and attitudes towards planning matters in both the regional and local context. Our initial research had enabled us to isolate some of the issues of local interest and we were concerned to elicit the respondents' awareness of these, their source of information and their consequent opinions on such matters. Some of the issues mentioned were common to all areas, others were more specifically connected to particularly local circumstances. Details were also obtained on whether the respondents had made use of the official channels for participation by writing to the planning office or attending public meetings. We then inquired into the possibility of people participating in local affairs through non-official channels, such as joining local action groups, signing petitions, etc. Finally, we explored the respondents' knowledge of local government personnel and procedures and their feelings of political efficacy.

The third section of the interview schedule was devoted to gaining information concerning the social networks of respondents, in particular their kin, neighbours, friends and workmates. For each contact mentioned, occupation, residence, frequency of contact with ego and involvement in local affairs were all recorded. From this it was hoped to build up a picture of the types of social networks existing in the different localities, and to relate these to the socio-economic circumstances of the individuals in the sample and then to their knowledge of attitudes towards and participation in local affairs. The type of social network was expected to be important in attitude formation and in influencing the type of response (or indeed lack of it) made to the public participation process. Due to the difficulties of processing and limitations of time, the network data from the survey was

never fully analysed. The other sections of the questionnaire, however, yielded immense amounts of information on local attitudes and affairs.

Most of this fieldwork was aimed directly at investigating public responses to planning and the research produced some interesting comparisons between the three case-study areas, showing that successful public participation is based only partially on socio-economic characteristics. We found local historical factors, the quality of social networks available in the area, the presence or absence of statutory bodies and the style of leadership adopted to be equally important variables in determining differential responses. However, as already suggested, it soon became clear that the respondents themselves did not draw a clear line between planning and other issues of local concern. It was therefore inevitable that a good deal of information on local political activity in general was amassed during the fieldwork period, much of which was not used in the final report of the project. This has been augmented where necessary by return visits to Bridgeman during which I have collected more data, particularly on voluntary associations and political issues other than planning. I have also done further work on the survey findings, which contained considerable detail on attitudes towards local government, notions of community identity and local affairs in general. It is often the case in social science that an investigation into one area yields interesting information on a separate but related aspect of social life. This was certainly true of the Cleveland project, where comparative research into public responses to planning led me to a consideration of local political activity in a single small community.

3. Further comparative material

To support the statement in the text that knowledge of the local area and involvement in local affairs were high in Bridgeham compared with the overall survey results, further statistical material is presented here.

Table 17. % who had taken part in a local issue.

whole sample	-	17%
Bridgeham	-	18%
North Ormesby	-	21%
Kirkham	-	20%
Marske	-	17%
Skelton/Brotton	-	13%
Hemlington	-	12%

Table 18. % who had attended a public meeting.

whole sample	-	27%
Bridgeham	-	35%
North Ormesby	-	22%
Kirkham	-	41%
Marske	-	22%
Skelton/Brotton	-	14%
Hemlington	-	26%

Table 19. Numbers Knowing Parish Councillors (where applicable).

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Bridgeham	48	27	8	13	4	0	0	0	0	0	-
Kirkham	33	24	16	14	2	5	3	-	-	-	-
Marske	58	15	18	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Marske had a joint Parish Council with Saltburn, so not all were resident in the immediate locality. The ratio of councillors to total population clearly influences the likelihood of great numbers of councillors being known, in Kirkham there are 6 Parish Councillors to a population of 786;

in Bridgeham 9 to over 3,000, and in Marske the proportion is even larger.

Voluntary Association Membership.

Membership of voluntary associations in Bridgeham is above the average - 58% of respondents belonged to at least one such organization, compared with 54% of the overall sample. More significant in terms of local involvement is the fact that the overall total was raised by the Kirkham respondents, 68% of whom belonged to an association; but only 24% of these were based in the immediate locality, whereas 44% of the Bridgeham organizations were based in the town.

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